



2023
Short Story
Contest Journal



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All stories were presented to guest judge, author Liesl Shurtliff, in the same font and size and did not include any information about the author.

Bill's Story

By Henry Hohman

4th Grade – 1st Place

Even as a baby, Bill was smart. At age two he could do addition and a year later he was doing multiplication and division. By the time he was seven he was learning how to code and solder old technology. He skipped three grades and was the youngest third grader in elementary school, but being smart came with some downsides.

He was bullied. A lot. Even by people that he thought were his friends! But he didn't dare tell his parents. But they soon found out anyway.

One day Bill got home from school he was greeted with hugs and smiles as usual, but then his parents' faces turned serious.

“How is school going, Honey?”

Bill knew where this was going. “Fine.”

“Are the kids at your school nice to you?”

Bill felt the butterflies in his stomach, “Yes...”

“Do you know that the school called today?”

Bill slowly nodded. Then he told them all about what had been happening, “But I'm fine! It doesn't bother me!”

They weren't convinced. “It's not okay, Bill. We want the best for you and you should feel safe and welcome in school.”

Instead of going to school Monday morning, Bill stayed home. He would homeschool with his dad until he was ready for sixth grade. Bill enjoyed the time with his dad, but missed being around other kids. When he finished fifth grade he was excited to go back to school.

The first year at his new school there was a science fair. The assignment was to do a scientific experiment with a partner.

“But I don’t know anyone at school! How am I supposed to do this assignment?” Bill complained to his parents.

Then something unexpected happened. A couple days later at school someone started to walk over to Bill. He thought that they would just tease him or something so he started to walk away.

“Hey, wait!” Bill stopped and turned around. “I’m Jason, from math class. Do you want to do the science fair with me?”

Bill really wanted to do the science fair so he said yes. The next day they got right to work. Jason and Bill had a bunch of ideas for projects, but eventually they decided on a project and started collecting materials. They found some metal cans and clear plastic in the recycling bin. They dug through a mountain of old electronics in the dumpster behind Eli’s Electronic repair. They got some copper wire from Bill’s dad’s workshop and Bill’s soldering kit.

Over the next few weeks, they met after school every Tuesday and worked on their project until one day when Jason showed up at Bill’s house, his eyes red from crying. “I have something to tell you, Bill...”

“What is it? You ok?”

“I won’t be able to go to the science fair with you. I’m moving to Tallahassee.”

Bill’s heart fell down into his stomach. “That’s in Florida! That’s 500 miles away!”

When the day of the science fair came, Bill was as anxious as ever. When the judges came to Bill’s project they said, “You need a partner to be considered for a prize.”

As the judges walked away, Bill pressed a button on their project, a metal box with lots of buttons and switches.

“Wait!” A voice crackled through a speaker in the box. “I am Bill’s partner! I’m radioing you from Tallahassee Florida, 500 miles away with the radio we made together for the science fair!” Even though both of them weren’t there in person, the device they made enabled them to still be together as friends (and winning the science fair didn’t hurt either.)

The Book Fairy

by Inaya Ahmed

4th Grade – 2nd Place

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Phoebe. One day her father and brother were going to the library to checkout some books. They asked Phoebe if she wanted to go. They knew she wouldn't go but they asked anyway.

“Hey Phoebe! Want to come to the library to-”

“No thanks!”, she replied to an unfinished sentence. Instead, she played games and watched videos. She hates reading. Whenever her teacher, Mrs. Welbie, goes outside the room to talk to someone, she asks the kids to read. But does Phoebe read? No, she does not. At the library in school, they have to checkout at least one book. So, Phoebe gets one book and returns it without reading the next day.

There is a book fair at her school in two days. She hates book fairs because she hates everything about reading. Mrs. Welbie said everyone should buy at least one book. Phoebe didn't want to buy a book. What is she gonna do?

When she got home from school, there were books all around her bedroom. Phoebe screamed and did not set foot in her room. Phoebe had to go to sleep that night of course so she was surrounded by books. She mysteriously woke up spotting a bright light coming to her window. As it got closer, she said,

“OH MY! ARE YOU A TOOTH FAIRY? I'M SO SPECIAL I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO LOSE A TOOTH!” Phoebe shouted quietly in excitement.

“No, I'm not a tooth fairy. I'm a book fairy. There's a huge difference!” said the fairy. Phoebe told the fairy how she felt. The fairy said, “I'll help you! And I'll be invisible to others.”

But wait a minute, Phoebe found her room with books and there is a book fairy at her window so the fairy might've put the books in her room. Athought about that, the fairy disappeared and so did all the books. She was ready to go to bed, excited, but nervous.

The next day when she was ready to go to school, she put the book fair money in her backpack. She has to buy a book and keep it. When she got to school Mrs. Welbie said that the book fair will be at 11:45.

“Phew, still a long time to go,” Phoebe said to herself.

Two hours later, it was 11:00. Forty-five minutes to go. Phoebe kept looking at the time. Later on, she stopped looking at the clock. Her teacher told the students to get the book fair money and line up. She became nervous but when she thought about the fairy, she felt better. Phoebe looked at a few books and suddenly, the fairy appeared in her face. Phoebe didn't know what to do now. The fairy told her to get a book and look inside. Phoebe thought the fairy was

her only hope. So she got a book, flipped to a random page, and started LAUGHING. It was called the Very Hungry Caterpillar! She loved that book and noticed that it didn't have anything she didn't like. She got so confused.

“Wait, but...” Phoebe said.

“ Oh Phoebe, you have passed your test. All you have to do is read and like a book. How easy is that?!” The fairy said. Phoebe was so happy and surprised. Phoebe found another book. She skipped through the book and loved it. So, she bought both books. When Phoebe got home, she showed her parents the books she got. Her parents were so happy that she likes books now.

After she talked with her parents a bit more, she had dinner and then ran up to her room to read one of her books. First she read The Very Hungry Caterpillar. Then she got a message from her friend, Natalie. Natalie asked what she did because she knows Phoebe hates reading. Phoebe told her everything. They showed each other their books.

Believe it or not, the other book Phoebe got was called, THE BOOK FAIRY!

The Missing Crown Guard

by Aliyah Lopez

4th Grade – 3rd Place

Once upon a time in a faraway land there lived a kind king and all of his guards. He had 11 guards, but the one he loved the most was his crown guard. He loved his crown guard because his crown guard protects him the most, but one beautiful morning his crown guard went missing.

The king and his guards looked everywhere in the palace but they couldn't find him, but they did find a clue in the crown guard's room in the castle. It was a piece of a map that showed the castle, and there was a line leading to the edge of the map piece. So, the king thought they had to find the rest of the pieces to find out where the crown guard went, and as he studied it some more he saw that the line went southeast which is the direction of the village. So, he decided to check the village next.

At the village he asked everyone to search the village from top to bottom for a map piece. He told them that there will be guards all around the village, so if you find it, tell the closest guard to you. So they did. Looking everywhere in their houses, on the roofs, in barrels, and even in the tall grass, one person found it in a tree near the village. When he brought it to one of the guards, the guard gave it to the king. This time the line was pointing northwest which was the direction of Queen Corel's kingdom. So that's where he was going to look next.

When they arrived at Queen Corel's castle they asked her if she saw a map piece or his missing crown guard. She said that she hasn't seen either of them, but she agreed to help look for both. She had 20 guards. She told half of her guards to search the palace and half of them to search the village of her kingdom. So they searched as the king, his guards, and the Queen waited for a guard to come back to tell them if they found anything. They waited a long time but finally a guard came holding a piece of paper, and he gave it to the Queen. The Queen gave it to the king, and the king studied it. He saw it was a note from his crown guard, and he read it aloud:

“My dear king, I have gone to visit my family because it is my daughter's birthday, and I just had to be there to see her open presents and blow out the candles on her birthday cake. I am sorry I didn't tell you, but I did get you out of your castle, and that's all I wanted. See you tomorrow. Your crown guard.”

The king was so happy that his crown guard didn't quit without telling him, and it did feel good to get out of his castle. Now all he had to do was wait for his crown guard to come back tomorrow, and everything would be back to normal.

The End

Too Many!

by Maya Batiller

5th Grade – 1st Place

The day the school nearly got run over by unicorns was pretty much my fault. You see, I go to a magic high school - Nova High. I can't tell you where it is, though, because no regular humans are allowed. Enough chit-chat. Let's move on to the story.

It was September 13. My friends, Seleste, Diana, Tasha, Amelia, and I were in front of the school. We were talking about our "Magic Animal Encounters" class. An idea formed in my head. "Guys," I said, smiling mischievously, "You want to meet in the Summoning Workshop after school?" I looked at the others. "You guys in?" I asked. They looked nervous. "Sure?" they all responded.

The day dragged on. As the last bell rang, I summoned a decoy. I made myself invisible and exited the classroom. I stopped in front of a door labeled, "Summoning Workshop!" I opened the door. Seleste was already there. I turned off my invisibility spell just as Amelia walked in, holding a small bag. Diana and Tasha walked in and sat down. "So," Diana asked, "Why are we here?" I smiled. "Well, we're in the Summoning Workshop. What do you think we're going to do?" She groaned. "Please no rats!" she pleaded, "Remember last year?" I smiled. "Do I? Of course, I do! We're going to summon a unicorn - BUT we're going to send it back after five minutes," I quickly added as Diana started to say something. "Oh, fine," she sighed.

After getting all of the items ready, we sat in a circle. Now, I can't tell you what we said or did, because if regular humans learned how to summon, we would be in big trouble. The circle of items began to glow. Ten minutes later, a large pink portal sat in front of us. "Okay, everybody," I instructed, "back up." We all stepped backwards as a large white shape shot out of the hole. "NEIGH!" it screamed as it crashed into the wall. Oops. It stood up, and there it was. A unicorn. Its body was a pristine white, its mane and tail flashing the colors of the rainbow. A golden shiny horn was fixed upon its head. I gaped at the unicorn. It neighed in confusion. I was about to step towards it when another figure shot out of the portal. "Uh-oh." Tasha stared at the new figure. It was another unicorn! Suddenly, the portal became a minigun. It shot out unicorn after unicorn, and soon the whole room was filled with unicorns. A tail smacked me in the face, and I got a faceful of unicorn hair. I spit it out and yelled at the others, "Get out of the room!" I stumbled out of the classroom and ran into Seleste. "Sorry," I mumbled, but before she could reply the unicorns burst through the door and into the hall. The unicorns picked us up and swept us into the main hallway. I could barely see over the crowd. On my left, Tasha had managed to successfully get onto a unicorn's back and was riding it. Amelia was being carried by two unicorns. I couldn't see the other two. I had to scream for the others to hear me. "Herd them

back to the portal!" Tasha nodded and turned her unicorn. I lost my grip and fell off of my unicorn. Yep, you can bet I got stepped on. Soon, the main hallway was empty. I quickly did a healing spell and ran to the Summoning Workshop. I could see unicorns up ahead and Seleste herding them into the room. I walked into the room to see Tasha and Diana laying on the floor, panting. "Well," I said, "now that that's over-" "Ahem." I turned around. Our headmaster, Mrs. Phillips was behind me. "Care to explain?"

CF Stingray

by Nala Winter Panozzo

5th Grade – 2nd Place

You may have heard of the incredible tale of Cancerzilla but this is my story. My adventure started when I was just four years old. I had been planning how I was going to defeat the CF stingray and find a cure for Cystic Fibrosis. Also, did I mention my adventure is a fully aquatic adventure. Anyway, I am now ready to dive into my adventure. And defeat this ginormous CF stingray.

I gathered all my gear for my adventure. I brought my shake vest, my nebulizer, and my medicines. I was ready to take on this beast, just like my sister Summer took on Cancerzilla.

First, I hid behind some seaweed. I saw the horrible CF stingray. I got my shake vest out and I jumped out of the seaweed. I threw the shake vest on the CF stingray but I missed. I was going to give up but I knew this would be hard so I kept going. I don't know where the beast went. Then all of a sudden I saw a little starfish. The starfish said calmly, "the CF stingray went right". "Thank you" I exclaimed. I found him hiding. I had the chance to leap over him and throw the shake vest on the monster. The CF stingray got smaller and weaker. I got the first ingredient to find a cure for CF. The ingredient was called, CF killer 200.

Next, it is time to make the CF stingray even smaller and weaker. I am in the ocean looking for the monster stingray. The next part of the adventure is going to be harder than the first part. My plan is to get the nebulizer over the CF stingray and hold it there but the CF stingray hid himself inside a giant clam. I will have to get him out. "Well here goes nothing", I say. I tickle the clam which makes him spit out the stingray but the clam grabs me. I tickle the clam once again and dive roll out of it. It was scary and I was starting to feel sick. Just then the same little starfish from before asked if I needed help. I was so grateful he asked. The Starfish and I worked together to get the nebulizer on the CF stingray. He once again got smaller. My second idea for finding a cure for CF was a purple potion. It was glittering and bubbly.

Finally, it is time to get the last ingredient to find a cure for CF. It looks like there is a germ shark. This is not good. A germ shark is going to make me sick and tired. I have to push through and be brave. The shark challenges me to a race through the ocean. I have to do it. We go to the starting point and we're off. He is in the lead so I throw the medicine on him and he slows down. Now, I am in the lead and I can see the finish line. I won, I shouted! I was so happy! I saw the CF stingray get so small and I got my final ingredient. It was called CF gone.

Time to defeat the CF stingray once and for all. I mixed all my ingredients together and got a pill. I named the pill Trikafta. I threw it at the CF stingray and he disappeared. I was not sick anymore. I could not believe it.

Hi, my name is Nala and I actually have Cystic Fibrosis (CF). I have to do a shake vest and a nebulizer every day. And take a lot of medicine. I have to use a lot of grit. There is actually a medicine called Trikafta. It will not get rid of CF but it will help so much. I take two in the morning and one at night. It helps so much. The end!

The World in the Time of Me

By Aarav Sharma

5th Grade – 3rd Place

Chapter 1: Why

I am Tom Wellington. I am a fourteen-year-old boy with his Ma, Pa, six brothers and three sisters plus my aunt. I am the second to youngest brother in the family. four of my siblings already have their OWN kids. And four others have jobs right now. Which leaves me and my sister Annie (who is five). Life's normal, except one thing... were in the middle of the American Revolution of 1775. Were one of the colonists who moved to America from Britain. It was a terribly rough ride many died, fortunately our entire family was safe in those many horrid months. Everything went perfectly until fighting broke with Britain in Lexington and Concord, calling it the first shots fired. Most people were scared, but some were angry. My family just ignored it...personally though, I am worried.

Chapter 2; what will happen next?

It's been a long time since any serious fight has arisen, so It's considered safe.

"Hey Tom go grab some eggs from the barn." My dad says.

"Okay Pa, but there's not many left!" I exclaim. I walk up to the barn. Yeah the weird one, that has no painting on it, practically covered in dust and rust smoldering it. I could see Bunker hill from the ladder close to the barn. I decided to take a quick glance, so I climbed up, but saw something unexpected. There was British soldiers covering the hill and colonists raging to battle. Sadly, the colonists, even from here, look utterly unarmed.

Cannons exploded from the British. I jump of the ladder to warn ma and pa.

"Where are you rushing to!" Annie exclaims

"British! Battle! Here!" I yell. Annie gasps. I see ma and pa have figured out that the British are battling here. Ma rushes to go wake up Aunt Lydia This is not going to be good.

Chapter 3: Trouble

The British were killing on Bunker Hill demolishing colonists and closing in to houses and farms nearby. Annie was bawling while saying,

"Were Gunna Die!" While Ma tried to calm her down and Dad packing for battle just in case...but me and Aunt Lydia just waited to sit next to the fire place staring into blank space.

"Aunt, why do the British have to be so mean?" I speak in breaking tears. "You're basically calling

yourself and all of us mean ya now” Aunt Lydia says as she chuckles. She makes every dire situation funny. A crack of noise that panged pain to my ears whistled through the sky.
KABAM!!!

Chapter 4: The Battle of Bunker Hill

I woke up coughing the dryness out of my throat My eyes were stinging so bad it made them water. I got a chance after that to see what was yelling at me. “TOM! TOM!” Ma’s screaming at the top of her lungs.

“Ma, I’m Fine!” I yell back. She slowly helps me get up. I see tiny specks of people all blurred up fighting and shouting, but less colonists were up there and more British. After the destruction of our cottage me, my family, and many of our neighbors were forced to move to a safer place. The neighborhood was buzzing about what happened at Bunker Hill. We had a lot of people wanting to talk to us. I just ignored it, because talking about just made me feel like we wouldn’t have made it out there without a serious amount of death. I heard colonists are fighting for America’s independence. This is not the end of the great Revolutionary war, stated the great Ben Franklin. When I was little, I new one day the world be in a perfect state, but now even if the world will never be perfect, I will be okay. I hope America Thrives.

“Give Me Liberty, Or Give Me Death”- Patrick Henry

The End

Gone

by Noelle Veenker

6th Grade – 1st Place

SHE

She would always say
“Time will tell,”
and I believed her.
I believed her for a lot of things.
She was my family.
My only family.
I hoped
she could have stayed longer.

ME

It's 1 a.m..
So early
in the morning.
But,
I usually wake up at this time.
Ever since,
Well,
you really wouldn't want to know anyway.
I grab my bag
and walk out of my room.
I needed to move soon.
Before They come back.
I have been from
shed to shed,
orphanage to orphanage,
and family to family.
I never knew
what was coming.
But,
now I know,
I am on the run.

THEY

They are
my hunters.
They try to find me
and put me with a ...,
what They call "family."
I liked my first family.
I never talked about them though.
But,
should I tell this journal?
Should I tell someone?
I will tell this journal.
Not now.
Not now.

HE
He left me alone,
after she was gone.
He
abandoned
me.
I didn't know what to do.
I woke up that night
hearing rustling sounds downstairs.
I didn't think anything
was going to happen.
I was wrong.
I woke up in the morning,
wondering
why he didn't wake me up for school.
I thought
he was just sleeping.
He was just on a trip.
That's what I thought
for the rest of the day.
I thought
he would come back.
He never did.

SHE
She was gone,
before he was.

She was kind,
caring.
She was the one
that held us together.
He loved her.
I loved her.
We were
a family.
She disappeared
that one night.
We were
at a local firework show.
We were having so much fun.
I was playing
with the neighborhood kids.
My parents were talking to others.
When the fireworks started,
we sat down and enjoyed them.
They seemed to be
dancing flames in the sky.
The fireworks twirled around us.
I thought nothing bad would happen.
Until ... that black car pulled up.
Four people got out of the car.
Three were wearing masks.
Not normal masks.
Gas masks.
I caught a glimpse
of the one person who wasn't wearing one.
He had pale skin,
hair that looked white,
and dark eyes that were shimmering
with revenge.
I ran to my mom,
and I shook her arm as hard as I could.
"Mom! Mom!" I pleaded.
But, she was talking with another mom.
The men started grabbing guns.
I shook my mom harder.
She finally turned.
"Yes, Lilli?" she said.

It was too late.
The men started firing.
People screamed.
I got down on the ground.
Ambulances and police cars were coming.
I could hear the roars of their sirens
coming near us.
It passed so quickly through my mind.
The black car left.
The police came.
The EMTs scooped up my mom
and put her in the ambulance.
The doctors tried to fix her.
My mom died the day after.
I never saw my parents again.
They killed my mom.
Now, They are coming after me.
And
I have no idea why.

ME
Time to run.
They are on schedule.
They are still coming.
I am going to try
to stop them.
I stop
in the middle of the street.
“Come get me fools!” I yell.
They rush toward me.
I hide my phone behind my back,
and I hit the numbers 9-1-1.
9-1-1 is now listening.

THEY
“You took my mom
and my dad!
My whole family!
So come and get
me!”
They run over.

I hear faint sirens.
9-1-1 is coming.
I dodge They.
I punch They.
Then, the police show up.

ME
They are gone.
I am home with a new family.
I am starting to feel normal
again.

The Immigrant

by Lily Brandon

6th Grade – 2nd Place

I woke up in a rush. My older sister shook me awake and my eyes immediately flew open. I checked the clock on the wall, 11:03pm. I threw on some shoes and grabbed a blanket. I was out the door running up the hill as fast as my legs could carry me. Pausing, I turned around to see Mama and Papa running up the hill as well. Maria was up ahead of me, and our dog Max was panting while running by my side. I looked straight ahead and put on a burst of speed, racing up the hill. I finally reached the top where I could take a short break before running again. My sister patted my back and took the blanket from me before putting it in the bag that she carried around everywhere. I took a few deep breaths just as Mama and Papa came panting up the hill.

My parents went over by my sister and sat down. I didn't though, I got onto my stomach and crawled forward so I could see down the hill. They weren't even close to our home. I sighed a breath of relief as I was pulled back by my ankles, out of sight. I turned to see who had pulled me and to my surprise it was the neighbor boy, Isaac. He gave me a half smile then pointed to his family who had come over to sit with mine. I returned the smile, then turned back over onto my stomach and crawled forward again.

There they were, they had reached our home. My eyes widened and I called for Maria. She came over and crouched as I did. Her eyes went wide as well. "No.." were her last words that evening, right as they set our home on fire.

That evening was nothing but nonstop running. We had gone a decent few miles, picking up a few passengers along the way. Finally, we reached a village. I assumed it to be about one in the morning and I didn't usually feel the need to bother anyone that early in the morning, but tonight I did.

I ran up to the closest house and I knocked. I heard a dog grumbling inside, maybe a baby too. Then I finally heard the sweet sound of locks unlatching and a door opening. I smiled. "Hello sir. I am in desperate need of help, I have my family back there in the woods and we need a place to stay for the night. We could sleep in your barn; we won't make a mess and we'll be gone by sunrise." I spoke quickly and looked the confused, bed headed man in the eyes. He shrugged. "I've had a long day and a late-night young lady, so don't go causing any trouble in that there barn, you see?" I nodded quickly and thanked him. I nodded at the group, and everyone ran to the barn.

Once we were all safe and secure, I remembered something. I went back up to the front door and knocked again. After a moment the same man answered again, looking more mad than confused. "Yes?" He asked. "If anyone comes knocking on your door asking about us, would you please say you never saw us, but you did see a group of people headed that way." I pointed the opposite way we had to go, He nodded gruffly then stared at me. "You ain't running from the law are ya?" I went wide eyed. "I'm an immigrant sir. They wanna kill me and my family for no good reason. I wouldn't consider than running from the law, I'd just consider that running from death." And with that I went back to the barn to get some sleep, for I knew we'd be traveling on in the morning.

The Ocean – My Joy

by Luisa Savazzini

6th Grade – 3rd Place

Have you ever thought about what's out there in the deep blue sea? You might say coral, fish, sharks, turtles and more and you are right. I feel there is so much more hidden in the ocean. Hi, I'm Chioma, that means good luck in Nigerian. I am eleven years old and I live off the coast of Nigeria. I have two sisters, Bimpe (Nigerian for elegant and beautiful) is two years old and Titilayo (Nigerian for eternal happiness) is sixteen years old.

I enjoy going to the beach and sometimes I go to the beach when I don't have permission. The waves and the blue water help me clear my mind and stay calm. I feel at peace. My mom says the beach is dangerous because I can drown but I try to tell her that the beach is a calming, comfortable place. I haven't convinced her yet. I normally sit at the beach and make yarn and beaded bracelets for mom's shop.

One day I went to the beach and played with my friends until my mama came. When she showed up she asked, "What are you doing out when it is dark?" I responded, "Sorry mama!". She was so angry and replied, "And near the beach too! You're coming home with me young lady!" We went home and mama slammed the door as we went into the house. "What's wrong Mama?" asked Bimpe. "Your sister decided to disobey two of my rules!" Mama replied. I was so upset!

The next day I went to the beach and wondered, "What is in that ocean that she does not want me to see?". I had to know! I jumped in and swam into the ocean! It was better than I had imagined. I decided to swim everyday after that.

One day I saw some fishermen on boats catching fish. They swam far into the ocean and it looks like they were happy! I wanted to do it too, so I devised a plan. I left the house without Mama knowing; then, I bought a fisherman outfit and supplies in the market to disguise myself. I then headed towards the boats. I met a fisherman who agreed to let me fish on his boat. I felt that this was wrong, but I didn't think too much about it. To my surprise as soon as we started walking, I saw Mama coming toward us. I knew I was in deep trouble. My heart was beating so fast. I thought to myself, "I'm in too deep, I'm in too deep, I'M IN TOO DEEP!". When she got a good view of me she shouted, "CHIOMA ZAHRAH AKERELE WHAT ARE YOU DOING?". It was over! She was disappointed. She asked, "Why are you doing this after what I told you?"

"I love the water mom." I said

"What did I tell you!?" she asked.

"The water is not dangerous it is beautiful and provides us happiness, food, and water." I responded.

She thought for a minute.

“I didn’t know you loved the ocean so much that you would want to become a fisherman. I want you to follow your dream because I believe you have found your life’s purpose, in the ocean!”

I was relieved. We hugged each other so tight and I felt very happy.

“I will let you swim, just don’t drown!” she said.

“I won’t.” I laughed.

Now I get to swim, fish and enjoy the beautiful ocean, with permission! The ocean is a great mystery and I have a different experience everyday. The joy I feel when I am in the ocean was the missing part of the puzzle. I realized that just like life, the ocean is available for me to explore in a way that gives me joy!

Additional Submitting Authors

4th Grade

Adyn Ali • Evan Berger • Charlie Chau • Samaya Cook • Harriet Dobrev
Ryan Dogo • Vanessa Dranca • Kai W Ebron • Madeline Gatlin • Maverick J. Hall
Hannah Ju • Lily Kaufman • Griffin Kreml • Ahana Malhotra • Matthew Venhrynovych

5th Grade

Erianna Arroyo • Avery Clark • Bayyina Dana • Rianna Maceren
Aria McNeal • Evan Nissen • Grayson Orr • Panayappan Panayappan
Eryn Nayeli Sanchez • Olivia Tafoya • Aadya Vasa

6th Grade

Nicholas Basile • Reese Bassett • Kate Beavers • Shokhjakhjon Djamalov
Sidney Gargano • Madison Greenfield-Sliwa • Charlotte LeRoy
Tessa McCune • Trinity Mekhael • Celia Okoroh • Shreyan Paul



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