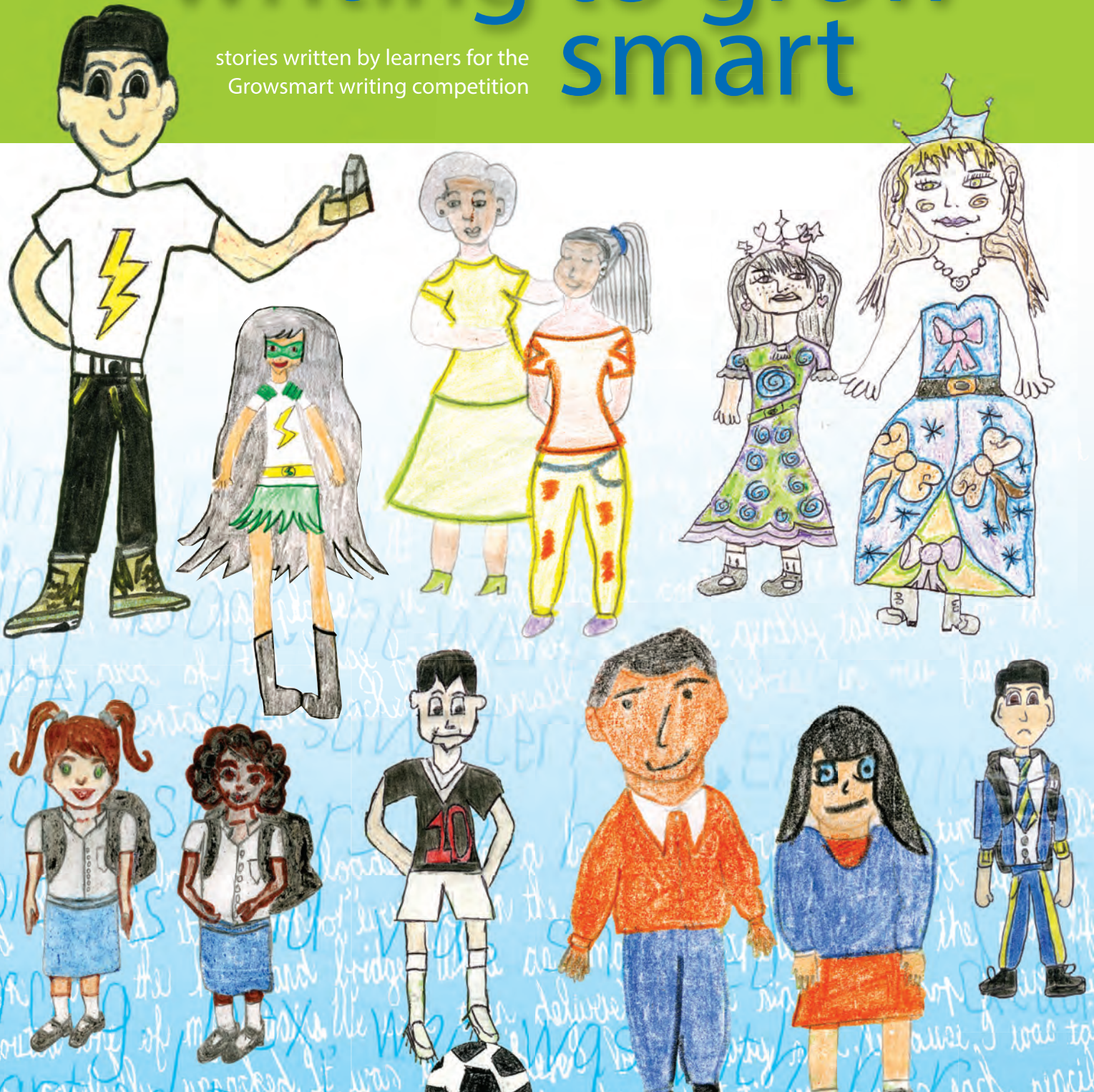


Children writing to grow smart

2016 selection

stories written by learners for the
Growsmart writing competition



Children 2016 selection writing to grow smart

stories written by learners for the
Growsmart writing competition





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Contents

- 7 A message from **Growthpoint Properties**
- 8 A message from the **Western Cape Education Department**
- 10 A message from **Via Afrika**
- 11 A message from **Paarl Media**
- 12 **Cameron Snell** • Captain Cammy Cool
- 24 **Tahica Moses** • The magical mystery box
- 32 **Kaylem Abrahams** • Two friends who saved the ring
- 40 **Ethan Doolabh** • Ethan and Elliot
- 52 **Tanique Williams** • How Feathers found his soulmate
- 56 **Dené Nel** • Spider trouble ...
- 60 **Esethu Khiva** • The mystery of the pencil
- 68 **Cleo Blom** • Short, sharpen, sweet
- 72 **Karla Vermeulen** • Saved by an orphan!
- 76 **Toufeeqah Carelse** • Flowers in Manhattan
- 78 **Lilitha Gcinisiko** • Crossing the boundary fence
- 86 **Logan Carelse** • Don't bite, just write
- 94 **Mugammad Niyaz Barnes** • The mysterious note
- 100 **Nuraan Achmed** • SuperSparks
- 118 **Nishaat Gallie** • Do you remember who you really are?
- 122 **Shaheeda Bey** • The world's most amazing sketch artist
- 126 **Xena Fisher** • The perfect gift
- 130 **Sisipho Tronk** • Will she ever change?
- 138 **Tasreeq America** • An act of love
- 144 **Aafia Abrahams** • Into the forest







and this is for my wife. The ring
behind the of blood
my hairy, chubby thing. I saw
was walking next to the rest of my clan. I
a factory, near to the rest of my clan. I
stream, but ever darkening what I
stopped, and was a person dressed in
staring at me. I closed and covered
the diamond small, but I looked into his
he was already behind me. BOO!
a big machine and then carried
feet down from all the shops!
and as I looked into his
the diamond small, but I looked into his
to myself. It was on my dressing table,
next to my bed! How... how did he get it?!

he in the house while I was asleep or while
was at school? No! It can't be. When I ran
into the house, I looked out through the window
he had disappeared. As soon as I looked
me there he was, with his big eyes
son outside and stood next to the house so
he didn't see me, all of a sudden the
started to set and darkness fell upon
where she saw terrible, enormous
she had a fear

A message from Growthpoint Properties

"If you want a happy ending, that depends, of course, on where you stop your story." – Orson Welles

We all have a story to tell – young, old, rich and poor, black and white. Stories are the tapestries of our life, our history and our future. What makes this book so spectacular is that these stories are written by children. Children who are sharing their experiences, their happiness, their sadness and of course, their personal insight into the beauty of life with us, the readers. With a definite South African flavour, these stories capture our hearts and imagination with their innocence, honesty and in some cases, bravery.

This year, we received an astounding 202 submissions for the Growsmart Story Writing Competition 2016. They were all written by learners in Grades 4 to 6, most of whom come from previously disadvantaged communities in the Cape Town area and for some of whom English is not their first language. This book celebrates these young authors and encompasses many of Growthpoint's values, amongst them being that our people are our most important asset. We are extremely proud to be a part of an initiative that explores the human condition and enables us to watch these young minds grow and flourish.

Norbert Sasse, CEO



A message from the Western Cape Education Department



By creating something, children learn about themselves. In story writing, they explore different types of characters who face an assortment of issues. They develop their capacity to create something distinctive. Through appreciation they discover their voice. They experience their writing as praiseworthy. Creative writing encourages children to use their imagination. This, in turn, allows them to extend their thinking about the world in varied and meaningful ways. The ability to write is a personal skill for life, as well as a professional skill in almost every career path learners may choose to follow.

On behalf of the Western Cape Education Department, we thank Growthpoint Properties and their partners for running this inspiring writing competition successfully for a third year, as well as for the addition this year of the Mathematics and Natural Sciences divisions to the language section of the general competition. By expanding the competition to include these key areas of the curriculum, the intellectual capacity of learners in Languages, Mathematics and Natural Sciences is broadened. Early success in problem solving clearly enhances the logical and critical thinking of children and encourages them to engage in even more complex reasoning.



We thank Growthpoint Properties for helping our children to grow smarter. We applaud the participating schools for accepting the challenge to develop their performance in these subjects and in the writing competition. The learners who participated in these individual competitions come from primary schools across the City of Cape Town. We are confident that school communities will continue to strive to increase their learners' achievement so that learners can take full advantage of the considerable opportunities that will exist in their future.



Brian Schreuder, Deputy Director-General:
Curriculum and Assessment Management



A message from Via Afrika



At Via Afrika, we usually work with educational texts that help teachers and learners discover the joys of education. It is our task to team up with the authors, editors, illustrators, book designers, typesetters and printers to craft one person's vision into a living object that benefits hundreds, even thousands, of others.

It has therefore been our privilege to work with Growthpoint, the WCED and these talented writers to publish this anthology of experience and imagination. We were presented with stories that moved or delighted; artwork that showed aptitude and insight; and a passion that invigorated us in our tasks – quite an achievement for a group of people with many years of experience in the educational book industry. We look forward to being able to participate in further projects of this calibre.



Christina Watson, CEO

A message from Paarl Media



Writing skills form the foundation of education. The Paarl Media Group is therefore proud to be associated with the Growsmart project through printing this remarkable book. Paarl Media supports the education of our nation's learners, and our involvement in this initiative is a gesture of our ongoing commitment to education in South Africa.



Well done to all the participants in, and winners of, this competition; you have done South Africa proud.



Captain Cammy Cool

Cameron Snell

Balvenie Primary
School
Grade 5
Age 11

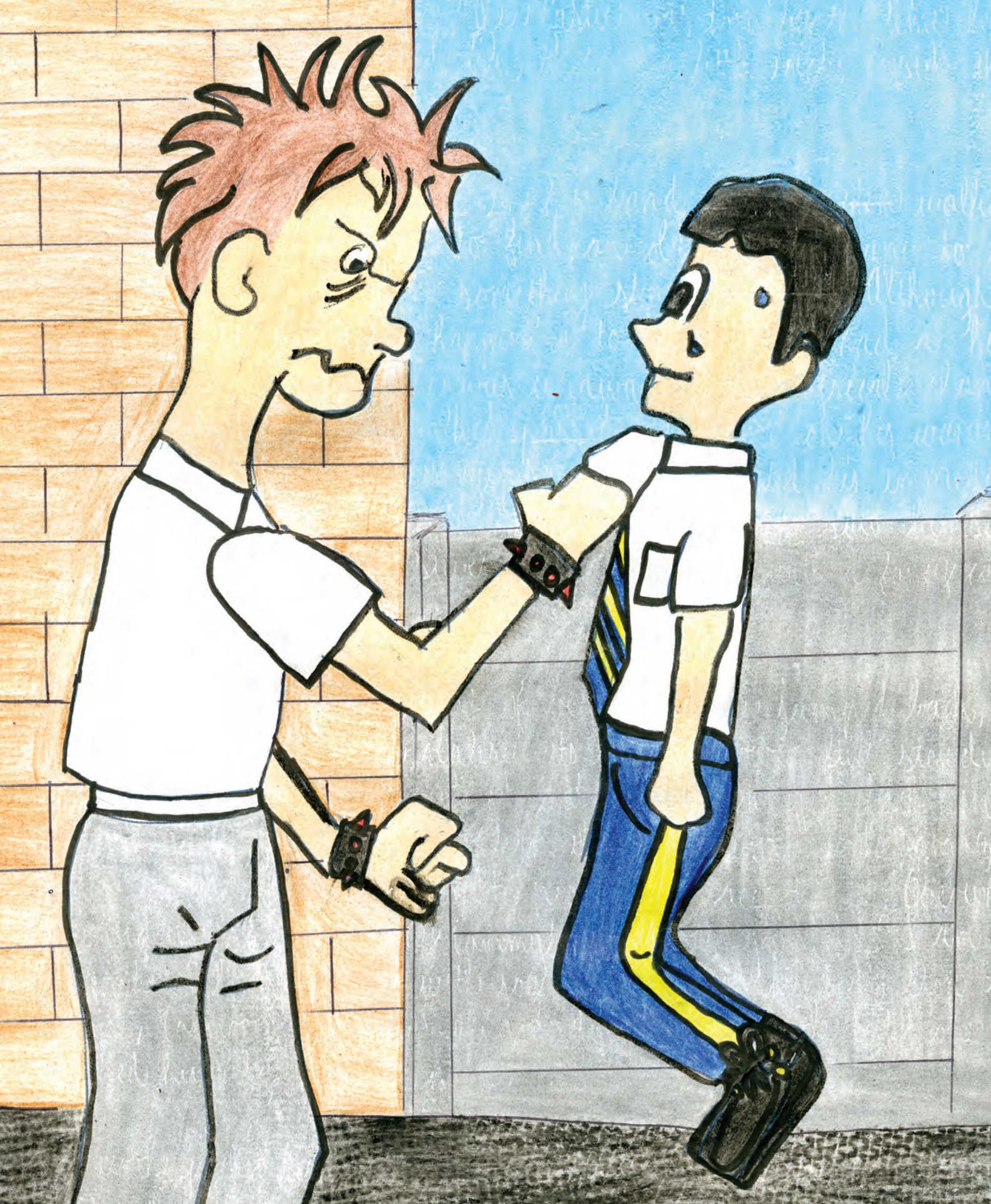
In a small primary school was a little boy called Cammy – a shy, hard-working and well-mannered young boy. He was a computer whizz and loved playing computer games. His favourite games were those with superheroes in them. The trouble was that Cammy and his best friend were being haunted every day by a school bully. Cammy's only escape was his vivid imagination that took him to a world of freedom. Until one day, a strange thing happened...

Once, not so long ago, in a school named Mountain View Primary, there was a boy called Cameron. His family and friends called him Cammy. Cammy and his friends were very close. Cammy was 11 years old and was very shy. He did not have many friends and was usually seen with one friend, Logan. The two of them spent their free time together doing things that they were interested in.

Cammy was small and thin and was fascinated by technology and loved computers. He loved games and spent his free time playing exciting video games. He had a particular fascination with superheroes. He thought that superheroes should really exist, so that they could rid the world of bullying and crime. Cammy had a very vivid imagination and would often pretend to be the superheroes that he saw in movies and in video games.

Cammy also had this obsession with stationery and collecting erasers. He could spend hours in stationery shops finding and buying erasers that were unique. He had many erasers in different shapes and sizes. He had erasers that looked like superheroes, cellphone erasers, transport erasers. Erasers that were hamburger shaped and ice-cream shaped; you name it, he had it.





Although Cammy always did his schoolwork and was an exemplary learner, he was very unhappy at school. Cammy and Logan were haunted by the school bully, John Paul, or JP as the teachers called him. The children called him Giant and he loved this title, because it gave him power and pride. Every child was scared of Giant and no one ever challenged him.

On a nice, hot summer's day, Cammy and Logan were just about to eat their hotdogs that they had bought at the school tuck shop, when Giant grabbed the hotdogs out of their hands and said, "I have a big stomach and I'm as hungry as a lion!"

He picked up Cammy by the shirt and also said: "You two skinny little boys don't need this. Scram, and don't you dare tell anyone!"

Giant dropped Cammy on the ground. He laughed and so did his followers. They walked away and left Cammy and Logan feeling very angry, downhearted and completely furious. Cammy and Logan got up and walked away. Cammy's heart was beating out of his chest. He was also scared stiff.

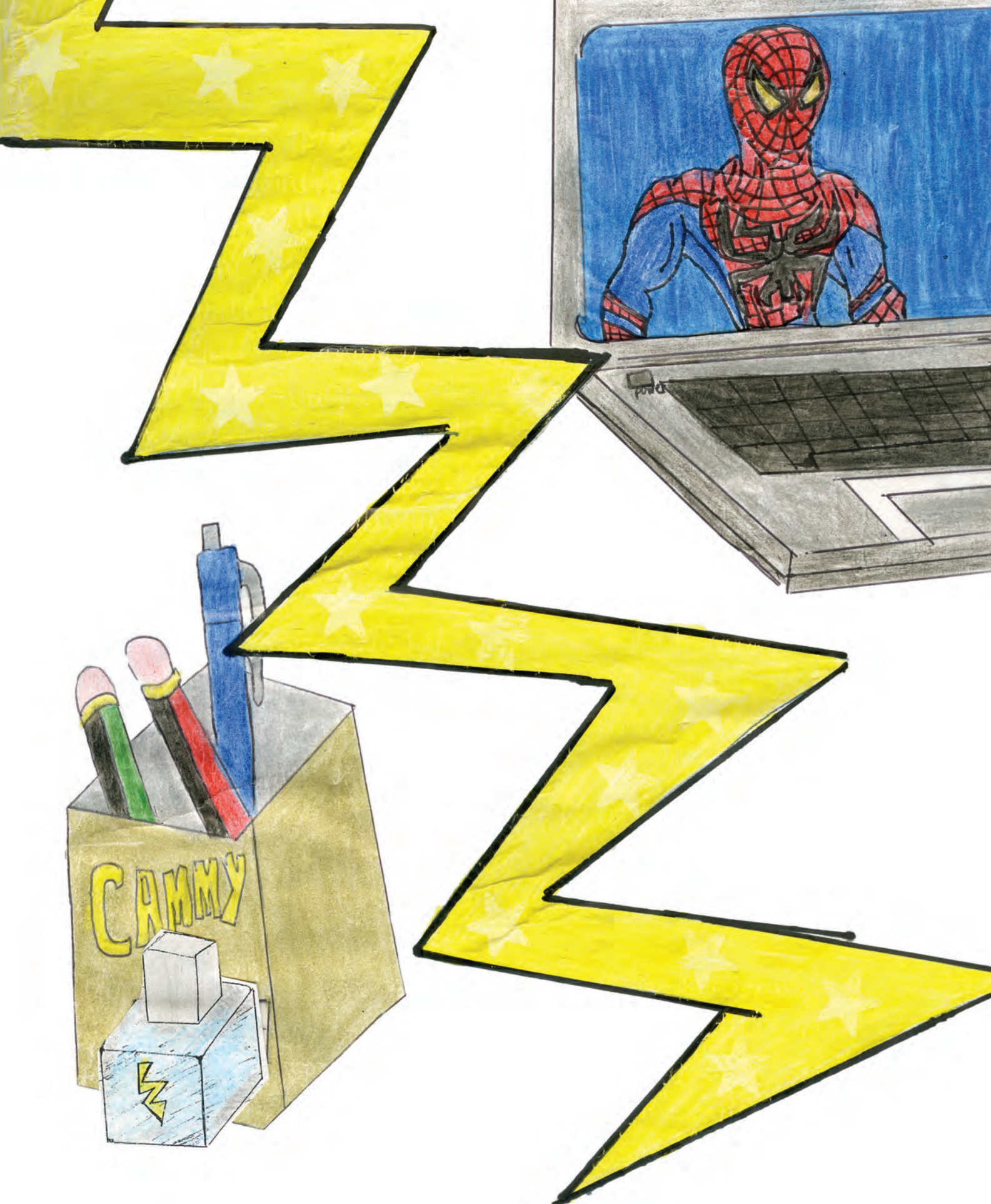
That afternoon after school, Cammy had calmed down from his terrible ordeal that was now taking place almost daily. Cammy and Logan told no one as they thought that it would just make matters worse. Cammy found refuge by doing the one thing he liked best – going to the local stationery shop to browse around and see what was new. Then something caught his eye.

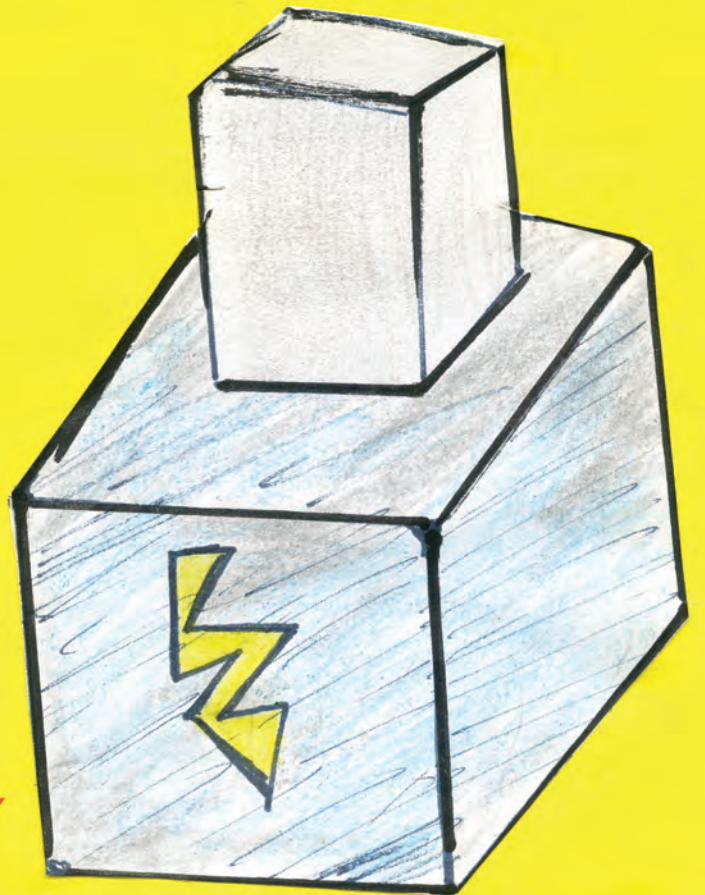
An eraser in the form of an ice-cube fascinated Cammy. It looked like a beautiful crystal. Cammy took this very amazing, beautiful and awesome eraser home. At home, Cammy could not wait to use it. He tried opening it as soon as he walked through the front door at home. He almost walked into the coffee table while rushing to get rid of the plastic packaging that it was wrapped in. The plastic was torn by the time he got the eraser out. It looked like there were little icicles inside the cubed plastic.

Cammy clutched the eraser in his hand and walked to the other side of the room to find an old piece of paper to test it on and then something strange happened. Cammy felt a hair-raising effect ... *something was happening to him* ... but he was unaware of the physical changes he had undergone until he walked past the mirror on his wardrobe and something attracted his immediate attention out of the corner of his eye. Cammy looked into the mirror and then saw himself, a superhero dressed in silver, red and yellow with a fancy cape and all.

His heart skipped a couple of beats and he jumped back and put down the eraser as he realised its strange power. Still standing in front of the mirror, he noticed that he had changed back into Cammy. What was at first fear and then shock turned into amazement and then a feeling of complete peace and acceptance. Overwhelming confidence filled his body. Cammy's wish was granted.

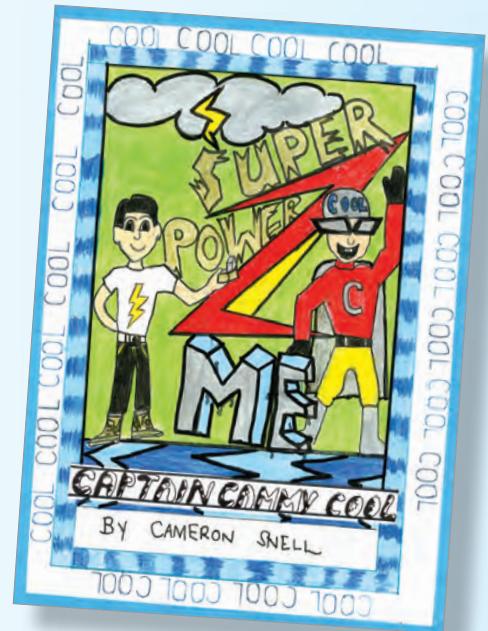
"I am a superhero!" he screamed with joy and jumped on his bed.





“Stop that noise, Cameron!” shouted his grandma, who was the only one who called him by his full name.

Cameron picked up the eraser again ... and he felt the hair-raising effect of his transformation once more. He stood in front of the mirror to check out his amazing superhero outfit. By accident, the eraser slipped out of his hand as he was trying to place it into a special place meant for it in his belt. The eraser fell into a glass of water and Cammy then blew on the water to get the eraser out. The water turned into ice. It solidified almost immediately. Cammy blew on the ice once more and then noticed that the room was filled with a cool gentle breeze that was so welcoming on such a hot summer’s day. He then realised what his superpower was. He was now cool, super cool, Captain Cool; no, Captain Cammy Cool.



For the first time the next day, Cammy felt happy to go to school. It was the farewell assembly for Mr Robbins, the principal, who was retiring. All the learners including Cammy, were sitting in the quadrangle on concrete slabs, as they had no school hall. It was still early morning, but it was extremely hot – 29 degrees Celsius – and it seemed to be getting hotter by the minute. Yet, Cammy was the only one not getting hot. He had put his eraser in his pocket.

When the assembly started, the learners and teachers were already extremely hot. The children could not sit still and were covering their heads with their hands, trying to create shade for themselves. Cammy noticed this as he was the

only one who could protect himself from the heat by using his superpower. Cammy could freeze things or make them cooler.

Just then he thought, "I can use my cool superpower to help my school." His heart was beating with excitement. He got up and went to the toilet (after his teacher said yes).

As he went around the school building, he took out his eraser, immediately changed into superpower mode and jumped up. As he jumped up, he felt himself lifting up and hovering above the ground.

"WOW!" he exclaimed, as he realised that he could also fly.

He flew up onto the roof of the school near to where the assembly was being held. He lifted up his hand towards his mouth and blew into the direction of the school quadrangle. Everyone there sighed as they felt the cool and gentle breeze cooling their bodies. Every person was up and awake and the assembly for the principal could continue smoothly and everyone was happy. Cammy felt very proud to be himself.

Then just as Cammy was about to change back into his normal old self, he heard screaming near the girls' toilet. He flew closer to that side. He saw Giant pulling a little girl's hair as she and her friend were trying to go back to the assembly.





“This is going to stop now, today. There will be no more bullying at Mountain View Primary School. This is the last straw. It’s show time!” said Cammy, in a very confident voice.

He jumped from the roof and landed face-to-face with the bully, staring into his eyes.

“And who’s this now in a funny costume? Hahahaha!” Giant laughed.

Cammy took both of his hands and pointed them towards an open tap, where a boy was drinking water. He drew the water into his hands and threw the water at the feet of the bully. The bully tried to move, but both of his feet were

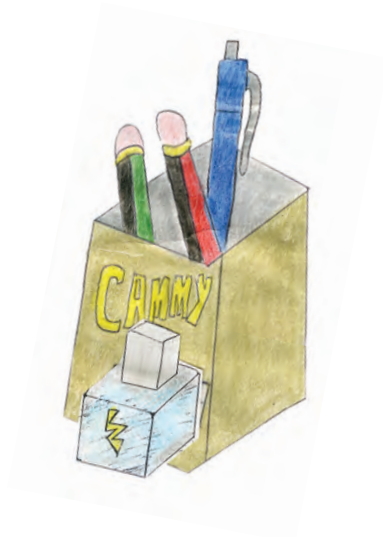
frozen to the ground. He tried to hit Cammy with his hands, but then realised that his hands were frozen as well. When he tried to speak, his lips were frozen together.

“Now you listen and you listen well!” said Cammy. “I am Captain Cammy Cool and I am here to stop you. If I ever see you bullying another child again, I shall take you to a place where you will work and slave for children for the rest of your life!”

This really scared JP.

“You will no longer be known as Giant, you are John Paul, a sweet and well-mannered young boy, who respects everyone.”

Just then, Captain Cammy Cool released John Paul from his grip. For the first time ever, Cammy saw the bully crying. From that day on, there was no more bullying at the school, as Captain Cammy Cool was always there to fight for the rights of the children.





The magical mystery box

Tahica Moses

Dagbreek Primary

Grade 6

Age 11

Illustrated by Oliver
Mutoba

Two sisters who love telling mysterious stories of witches and goblins have an adventure with a sinister stranger, a stolen ring and a fear of spiders. These events are entwined into a gripping adventure where they solve the mystery of the stolen ring with the help of a spider and a stranger.

Chapter 1 Stranger in the night

It was a cold, stormy winter's night. Portia and Beauty were telling mysterious stories to each other about goblins and witches. Because their parents were very strict about how much time they needed to sleep, they decided to cover their heads with warm blankets, so as not to attract attention. They spoke in low whispers, and used a small torch to see one another's expressions.

It was during one of these awful stories that they heard a thunderous knock on the front door. They waited in anticipation for their parents to react to the noise, but it continued with utter insistence.

Portia and Beauty got out of the bed in unison because they were both scared to death. Both girls tiptoed down the creaky staircase to the big, old oak door. Portia could barely reach the doorknob. Just then another damning noise accompanied the thunderous knock. It seemed as if someone was panting and heaving with distress. Portia and her sister peeped through the misty window. They could not see much as enormous tree branches were swaying frantically in the wind. In the moonlight, the girls saw a large, ghostly figure. A man stood there in a tattered



trench coat, patched with many colours, almost like a quilted tapestry. At first he looked scary, but with his face turned to the moonlight, he looked like a gentle, caring figure. Portia and her sister ventured towards the door, ignoring all the rules their parents had taught them. They opened the door and there stood this sinister stranger. Evil-looking in appearance, but with a kind face and with a gentle voice, he respectfully greeted the two little girls. He was in a great hurry, as if someone or something was chasing him. He handed them a package wrapped in a musty muslin cloth. It was boxlike, as light as a feather, and as soon as he gave it to them he vanished into the dark night.

Chapter 2 Creepy crawly

It started to rain again softly, raindrops dancing against the window panes of the neat little cottage. Beauty locked the door and both scurried upstairs, unnoticed by their snoring parents. They cuddled under the warm blankets, but had no intention of sleeping, because they were too curious about the contents of the box. Beauty, who is the older sister, unravelled the muslin cloth with her delicate child-like fingers. Suddenly, just as Beauty was about to open the box, they heard a scratching sound coming from within. Portia clung to Beauty, with her head barely visible from under the blankets. Both girls thought about snakes, mice, cockroaches, but they never expected to see the hairy legs of a big black spider. It was as if the mighty mini-beast was using all its power to force the box open. Beauty, with all her might, tried to push down on the half-open lid. Eventually the box closed with a SNAP! Both girls suffered



from arachnophobia – a fear of spiders – and they were not prepared to have a sleepless night with a spider in their bedroom. The frantic scratching continued to come from the musty box. With their first, natural instinct, they tossed the box through the window into the dark, miserable night. Little did they know that the box landed in their father’s old shed under the old oak tree.

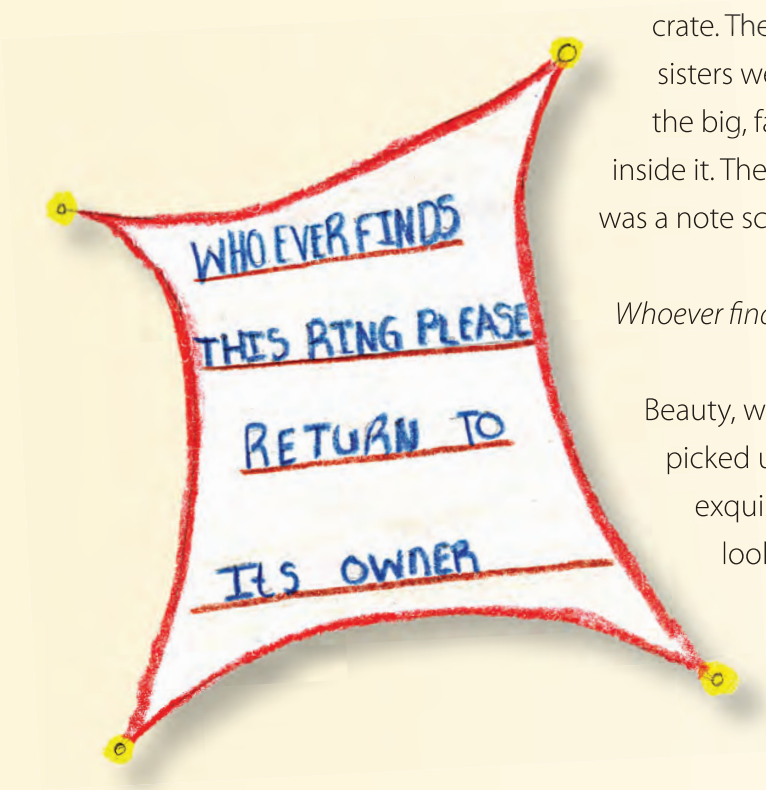
Chapter 3 An extraordinary discovery

The next morning, the two girls went about their morning duties. They were very curious to know where the box had landed. What they saw was a most amazing sight. In the shed was a makeshift bed, with the sinister stranger sleeping on a heap of soft heather that their mother used to make mattresses. Next to him was an unwrapped box, with

the dirty, old muslin cloth crumpled up on a little crate. The stranger was fast asleep. At first, the two sisters were afraid to open the box, thinking that the big, fat, black widow spider was still nestled inside it. They gently opened the box. Inside the box was a note scribbled in barely legible handwriting:

Whoever finds this ring, please return it to its owner!

Beauty, who was the bravest of the two sisters, picked up the note. Beneath the note was an exquisite, delicate ring with a blue stone that looked like a jelly tot. Around the large stone was a ring of little diamonds, with teeth-like claws claspings the delicate, precious stones.



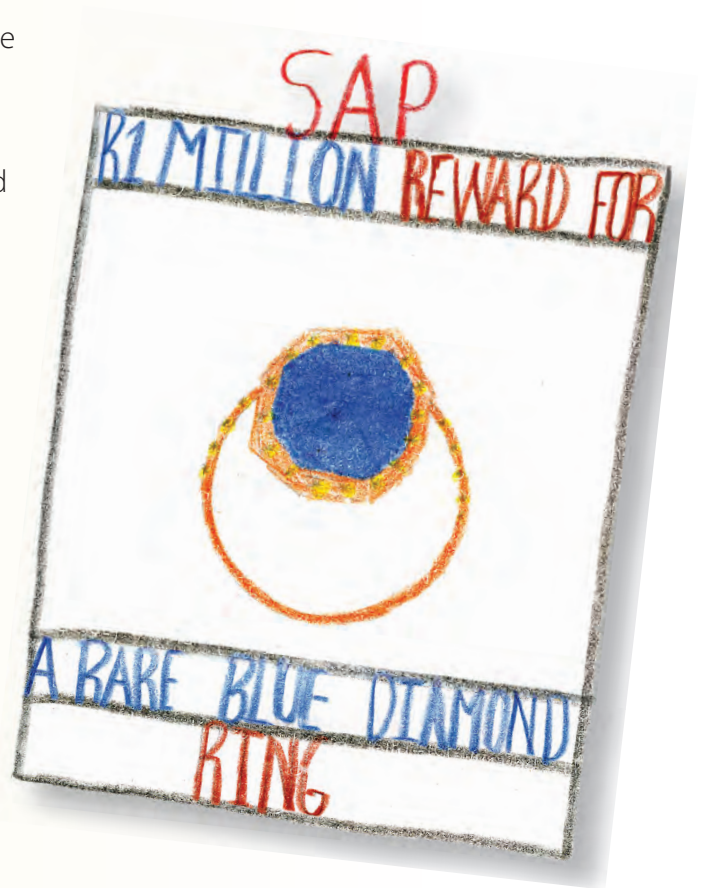
Both girls turned towards the place where the stranger was sleeping, but now all they could see was a big, black spider scurrying through a gap between the old shed walls. The two girls turned towards the priceless piece of jewellery. They sat down on the little crate, in a daze staring down at the ring. Is it a stolen ring? Does it belong to someone famous? All these questions went through their minds.

The only thing they could do was to take the stolen ring to the nearest police station. They had to be very cautious. Who could they confide in? Both girls decided to tell their principal, Mr Jones. He would definitely believe their story.

Mr. Jones, Portia and Beauty walked bravely into the dark, dingy police station. On entering the waiting room, Portia glanced at the notice board. There right in front of them, written boldly, was a notice:

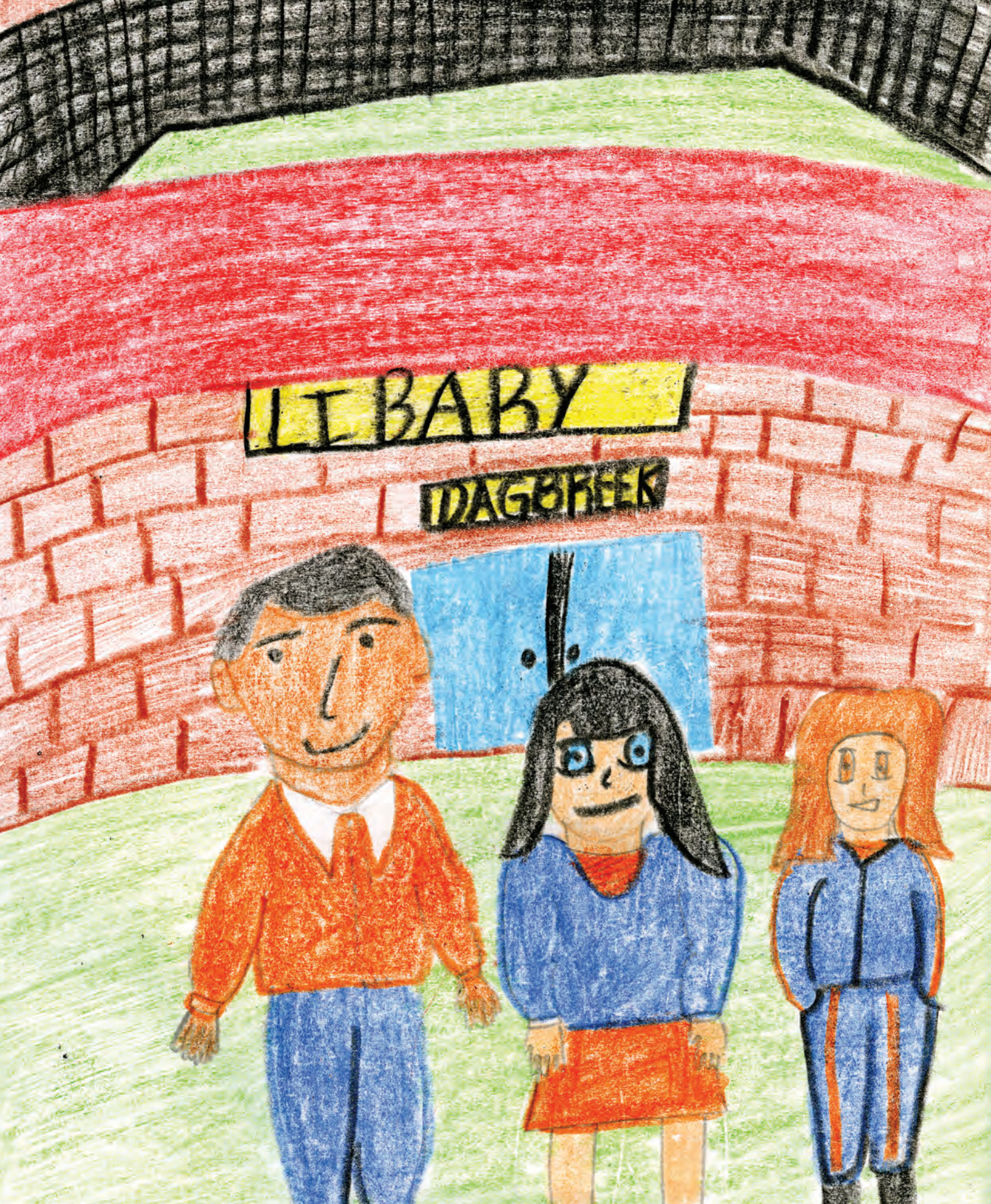
**ONE MILLION RAND REWARD
FOR A RARE, BLUE DIAMOND RING!**

They looked at the ring for the last time. The stolen ring belonged to a multi-millionaire. According to gossip in the village, the ring was given to her only son who died tragically 40 years ago, on a cold and stormy winter's night.



LIBRARY

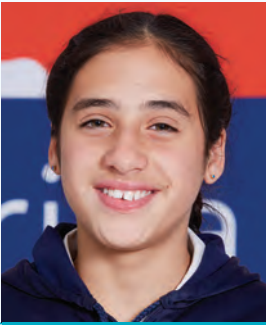
DAGBREEK



After his death, the ring was never recovered, and was reported as stolen.

The reward was handed to Mr. Jones, who together with the sister's parents, decided to donate the money towards a school library and to replace the school fence. The rest of the money was used to support Portia and Beauty's education.

To this day, there remain unanswered questions. Was the sinister stranger protecting the stolen ring? Whatever happened to him in the shed? Was the big, black spider the stranger that disappeared through the crack in the shed walls? Or was this just one of the many imaginative, ghostly stories told by children on cold, stormy nights?



Two friends who saved the ring

Kaylem Abrahams

Arcadia Primary
Grade 6
Age 12

Chapter 1

It was a bright, sunny Tuesday morning in early December, when Molly and her best friend Lizzy were on their way to school. The pair did almost everything together, such as homework; they attended the same school, grade and church. Molly and Lizzy lived in a small village close to the coast with their parents.

Both of their families were considered middle-class families living on a low-income rate per month. So like most others, both their parents went to borrow money from the village lender. He told them, after giving them the amount they needed, that it had to be repaid in a week's time (seven days) with an extra 50% interest per R100.00.

Their parents were afraid that they might not have enough to pay back the money lender in this short period of time and knew that the amount would accumulate if they should pay him short of the total amount they now owed him. The girls decided that they would do what they could to help their parents get the money. Molly and Lizzy went around the village grabbing every opportunity they could get to earn a few rand doing odd jobs such as washing windows, scrubbing rugs, sweeping and





WEST COAST
COMMUNITY CENTER

WELCOME

Cakes for Sale

Cream Cakes for Sale

Cake

mopping floors and many other jobs. The girls were exhausted. After three days of hard work they still didn't have the entire amount so Molly and Lizzy set out the next morning to take a walk into town to go see Mr Paulsen, the baker. He was always kind to them and would give them a treat every time they popped in to visit him and his wife as they had no children of their own. Mr Paulsen and his wife always gave them a basket full of cream cakes, because they understood that they were struggling.

Chapter 2

Lizzy suggested a very good idea – that instead of eating the cream cakes themselves – it would help if they could sell the scrumptious cream cakes to increase the amount they'd already accumulated to help their parents.

The next day, they were so excited to have a cake sale. They rose early, had breakfast and got dressed. They then set up a table, covered it with their best table cloth and decked it with the cream cakes. Molly made an attractive sign to advertise their cake sale. Unfortunately, the cake sale was not quite as successful as they had hoped it would be because almost everyone in the village worked on the farm with Molly and Lizzy's parents and they were also struggling to make ends meet. They were all out of ideas and the money lender was coming soon to collect his money. The girls decided to pack up and go home. It was an extremely tiring fourth day.

After a good night's rest, Molly and Lizzy decided to take another walk into town to do some exploring to get their

minds off the whole situation. After they approached the entrance to the town, Molly jumped frantically, with a loud scream.

Lizzy also jumped in fear, looking for whatever had made her best friend so upset, asking with a panicked tone in her voice, "What is it Molly?"

Lizzy then saw a fully grown, hairy spider, known as a tarantula. (Yes, these spiders are lethal because of their poisonous bites!) So, Lizzy grabbed Molly's hand and told her to run. Once a few metres past the spider, they then decided to slow down and stopped to catch their breath, and as anyone would. Lizzy, out of breath, laughed at what had just happened, enjoying the adrenalin rush of fear and being able to flee from danger. But Molly had a totally different reaction. She was having a panic attack because of her fear of spiders (not to mention that it was poisonous). Lizzy's whole expression changed when she saw how Molly's fear had crippled her. She helped her friend calm down but thought she needed some sugar water to calm her nerves. She saw the jewellery store ahead and lead Molly in.

She called for assistance, but no one came to the front counter. Lizzy told Molly that it was best that



2t0r6
Jewellery



Shh

they left and tried somewhere else because the empty store was giving her the creeps. As they were about to leave, the jewellery store's front door opened and then closed. They quickly peeped to get a glimpse of who had entered. It was a tall, heavily built man with a thick beard who wore a long, brown trench coat. He clearly knew exactly why he was there and what he needed to leave the jewellery store with. The two stayed very still until the sinister stranger had left. As soon as he had gone, the girls came out from behind the counter and decided to hurry home to their families, agreeing to let their parents know what they had seen at the jewellery store. Molly and Lizzy raced all the way home, hoping to reach there before dark as they did not want to disobey their parent's rules. Eventually they each arrived just in the nick of time to expect their parent's arrival home from work. Their parents arrived. The girls greeted their parents and waited to tell them everything after supper.

Chapter 3

Supper ended and they cleared up the table, did the dishes, bathed and changed into their pyjamas. They were ready for *that* talk with their parents, so they sat down and explained from the beginning to the end what had happened. Their parents thought it was best that they went together to the Town Police Station to report the incident after work and school the next day.

Meanwhile, it was discovered by the jeweller that a specific ring was missing. It was a ring that was designed and paid for by the mayor for his fiancée as a wedding band. The



jeweller informed the mayor immediately and they put up posters at once all over town about the missing ring. They also put out a reward for any information about the perpetrators and their whereabouts. The next day, when the girls and their parents arrived in town, they saw plenty of posters up on the walls and lamp posts. The posters told all about the stolen ring and that it was owned by the mayor and was for his dearest fiancée. They were in shock and the girls decided to go straight to the mayor's townhouse before going to the Police Station. As they arrived, the pair noticed something familiar about one of the guards at the security gates. The man hesitated letting them in, but they were determined to see the mayor but not sure of who to trust. They took a good look at the sinister man at the front gate and then went on their way, as they realized, and then were *certain*, the scary guard was in fact the thief who stole the ring. And so they felt it needed to be told to the police at once.



They arrived at the Police Station and spoke to the officer handling the case. The officer then contacted the mayor and asked him to come down to the Police Station immediately. The mayor arrived, and the officer explained what the girls had told them. The mayor was very disappointed and he told the police to go ahead and have the guard arrested. A while later, the mayor requested to meet the young, little ladies who solved the mystery and invited them to his house that evening with their parents for supper.

Chapter 4

Molly and Lizzy gladly accepted and they all went for supper. As supper ended, the housekeeper cleared the table and the mayor said, "Molly and Lizzy, from my fiancée and I, we want to thank you and we want to thank your parents for raising you both to be such fine young ladies. As promised, we would like to reward you both with R10 000 each. Also, after I saw you at the Police Station, I knew that you girls were special. So, I made a few calls to my associates and I was able to get each of you a bursary after high school to complete your tertiary education and pursue your dreams. I also felt that your parents needed some help, so we were able to help your parents with a job in an office environment so that they can start earning the salary they deserve!"

Molly, Lizzy and their parents were over the moon and couldn't stop thanking them for these wonderful gifts and couldn't believe what had happened for them. It was the start of a brighter future.



Ethan and Elliot

Ethan Doolabh

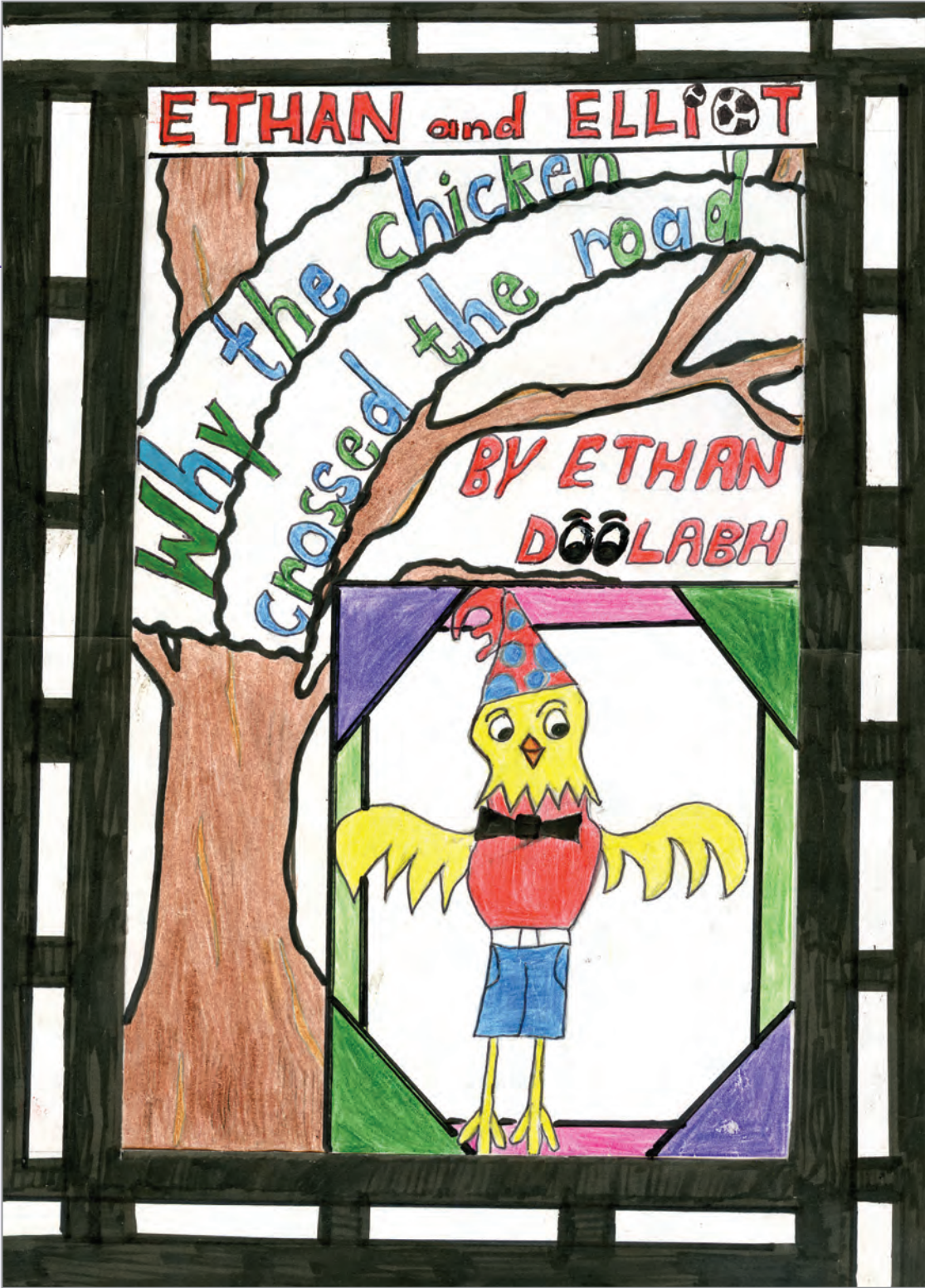
Balvenie Primary
Grade 4
Age 10

Have you ever heard of a soccer-playing chicken? This is the story of Ethan, a ten-year-old boy, who was a soccer fan and fanatic. Ethan's favourite chore was feeding his neighbour's chickens, but Ethan had a secret. No-one except his best friend knew his secret. He could communicate with chickens. Ethan finds himself befriendng Elliot, a soccer-playing chicken who in the end, saves the day.

Once upon a time in the small town of Riverside, there lived a ten-year-old boy called Ethan. He was in Grade 4 at Riverside Primary School. Although the school was only five minutes away from home, it was dangerous to get there, because they had to cross a very busy main road. Children were made aware of the traffic rules, so that they knew exactly where and when to cross this very busy road, but animals like dogs and cats were often injured or killed when trying to get to the other side.

Ethan was a hard-working learner and always did his homework and completed all his tasks in class. His parents and his teacher were always proud of his attitude towards his schoolwork and everyday life. Ethan loved school and especially loved reading books. He often visited the town library with his mom. He always read books about soccer – anything about soccer and anything about soccer anywhere in the world.

You see, Ethan was not only a soccer fan but a soccer fanatic. Soccer was his life and his all-time favourite thing to do. Ethan dreamed of one day becoming a professional soccer player. He had bright and colourful soccer posters all over his bedroom walls. When he looked at these posters, he always imagined himself scoring a goal in a big





stadium with the crowd cheering for him and blowing on their vuvuzelas. Ethan lived in a two-bedroom house near the Riverside Community Sports Centre, where he played soccer for his club, The Riverside Rangers.

Ethan also loved animals. He was fascinated with his neighbour, Mr Brown's chickens, that were kept in a large chicken coop. During the day, the chickens were allowed to roam freely in their neighbour's backyard. Ethan would often stand on a wooden crate to peep over the wall and stare at the chickens.

One day, he just blurted out, "Mr Brown, can I please help you feed them?"

Since then, Ethan helped Mr Brown with his chickens.

Ethan started talking to the chickens, "Hello, my friend, I'm so happy to see you," he would say. One day he said, "I wish you would at least answer me when I'm talking to you!"

"Hi!" said one of the chickens suddenly, "I am Elliot. Can you please bring me some clothes? It really gets cold at night in this chicken coop."

Ethan jumped up in shock, trembling and shaking. "You can talk!" he said.

Since then, Ethan became friends with the chickens and spoke to them. This was Ethan's secret that he only told his best friend, Gino, who was also on his soccer team. His secret was safe with Gino, but Gino had a fear of chickens



– or let’s rather say birds. He ran when he saw any birds coming.

One Saturday, Ethan discovered a strange thing. He was in Mr Brown’s backyard feeding the chickens. He was in a hurry, as he had to play a soccer match that afternoon. He was still cleaning the chicken coop, when he heard a constant thumping noise.

He looked and saw the most amazing thing and jumped with shock, “Oh my goodness, what is this?” He rubbed his eyes as if it was all a dream. He shook his head. Then he said again: “What on Earth is going on here? Gino! Gino!” he called.

Gino who was playing and waiting next door at his house, ran to peep over the vibracrete, “What is it?” shouted Gino, very annoyed; “We are going to be late!”

“Come, come please! You must check this out. Listen to this, listen to this,” He repeated excitedly, “These chickens can play, my brother.”

“Have you gone nuts?” said Gino looking completely amazed.

Gino who was still scared stiff of chickens, did not dare come too close to the chickens. He just stared at them over the wall in amazement.

“Hey there Elliot, you never told me that chickens could play soccer. You should join our soccer team!” he said,

laughing at the sight in front of him. "That's so cool, but I have to go now," he said, forgetting his soccer ball and running off to go and get ready for his soccer match.

Ethan also ran home, washed quickly, dressed in his soccer clothes and ran out as Gino shouted, "Hurry up now, I told you we're gonna be late."

"Better late than never, my mother always says," said Ethan. As Ethan ran, he shouted, "Hey, where's my soccer ball?" He ran back to Mr Brown's backyard searching for his ball. "Elliot!" he shouted, "Elliot, my ball?" Elliot was nowhere to be found.

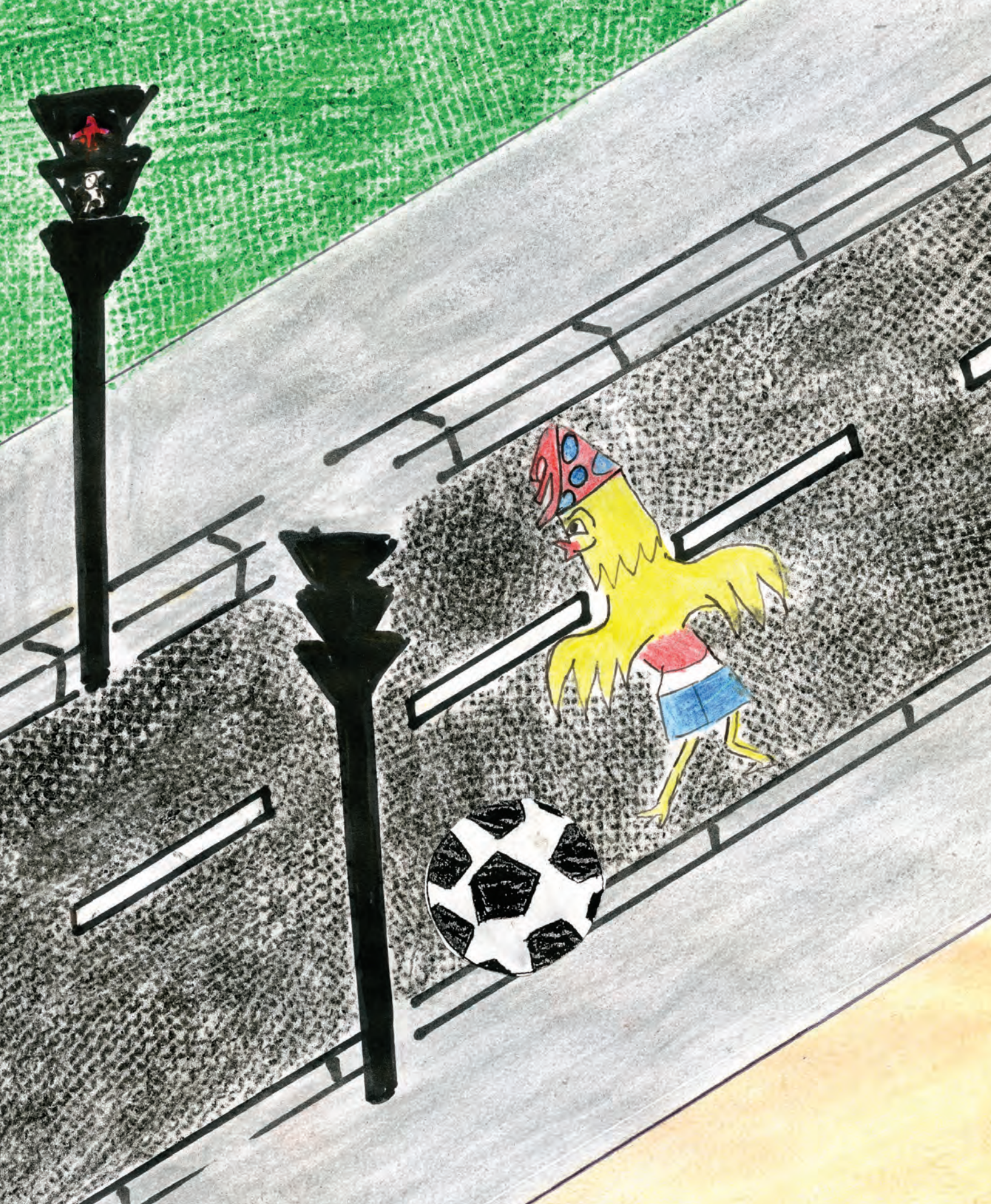
No one knew where Elliot was, until one of the chickens shouted, "Elliot took your ball, he ran towards the big road to find you."

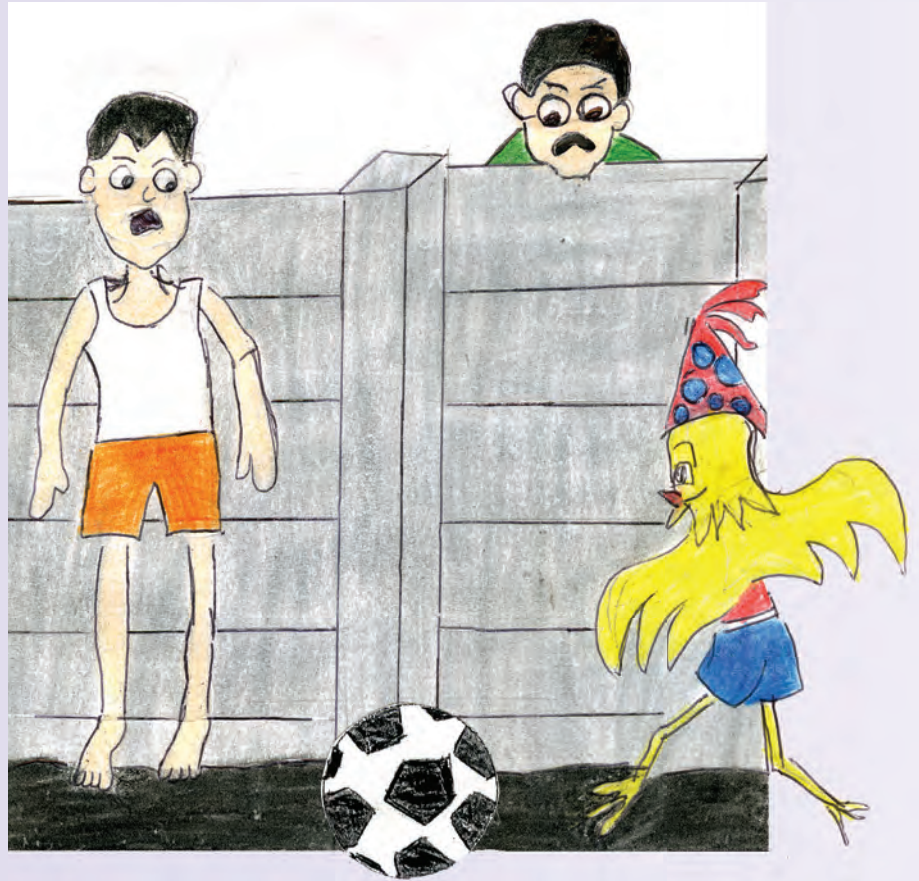
"Oh no, not the big road! That's dangerous territory for animals," shouted Ethan.

Ethan and Gino stared at each other for a moment and then Ethan ran towards the big main road to look for Elliot.

"Elliot, Elliot! Where are you?"

Ethan got to the pedestrian crossing first with Gino following close behind him. He pressed the button for the light to change to green. He couldn't cross the street fast enough. He was so worried about what could have happened to Elliot. They crossed the big and busy main road when the pedestrian light changed to green and ran





towards the stadium, looking and checking and calling for Elliot all the time. People stared at them as they had no clue that they were calling a chicken.

When they got to the stadium, completely out of breath, the coach shouted at them for being late and told them to immediately get to the team. Ethan had to go and play, but his mind was on finding Elliot. He heard a group of spectators laughing and talking in the stadium. When he looked up, he saw them all pointing and laughing at Elliot, sitting in the stadium, ever ready to watch the match, with Ethan's soccer ball in his lap.

"Elliot!" Ethan shouted, "Don't you dare move, you stay there until the match is over."

The crowd stared at Ethan in amazement as they could not understand that someone could talk to a chicken. Then they all laughed.

Just then, Gino screamed. "Ouch, my ankle, it hurts!" As they were running Gino had stepped into a hole and hurt his ankle.

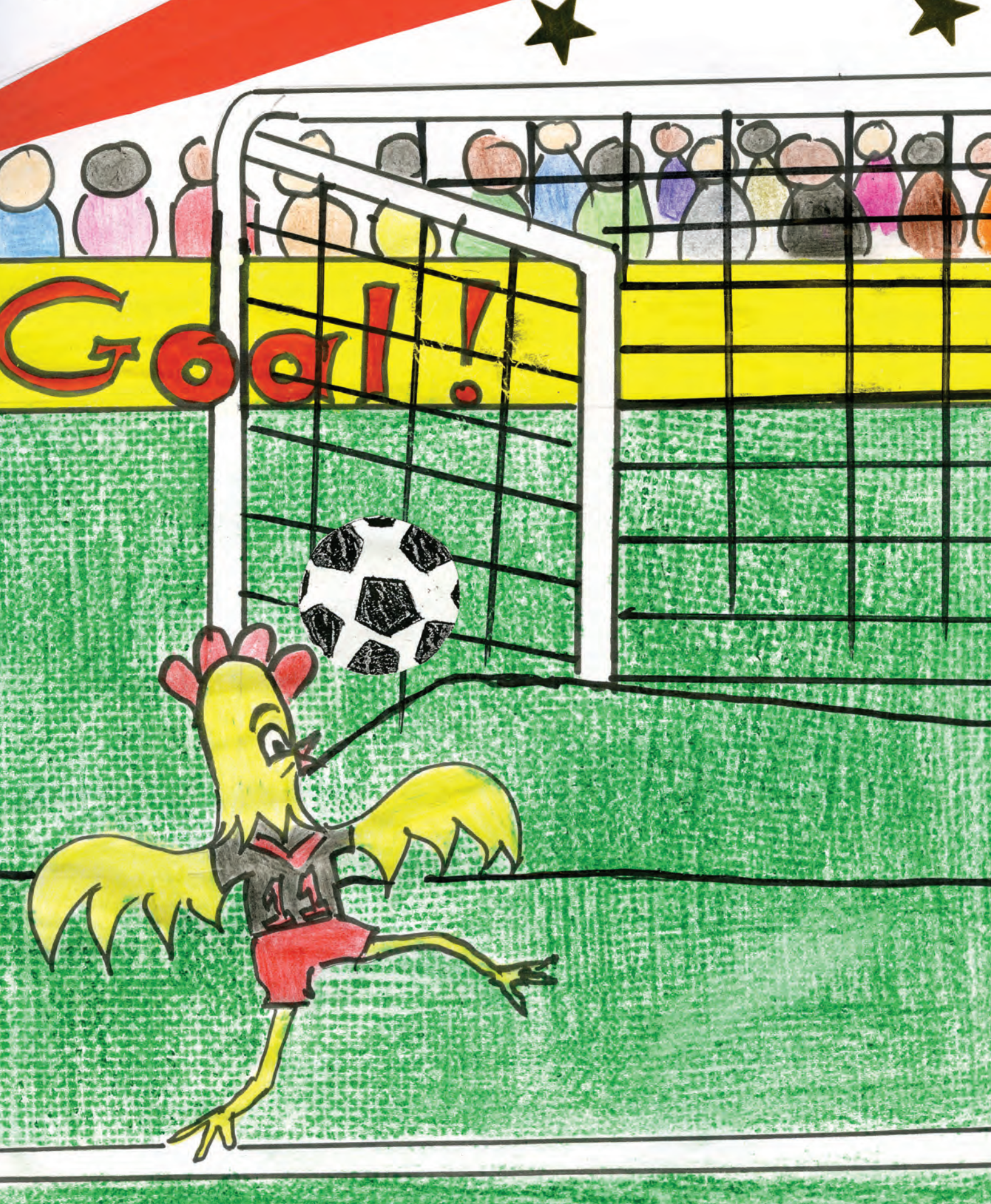
The coach looked at his ankle, "Oh no, it's bruised. Bring some ice. You will not be able to play today. We are one man down."

This was not good for the team. Then Ethan went to his coach and said, "Coach, I can get another player, he's very good at soccer. There's just one problem. He is a chicken. That chicken over there, the one sitting in the stadium."

"This is crazy, absolutely absurd!" shouted the coach. "Have you lost your marbles?"

"I am so serious, coach, please! Just give him a chance. You won't regret it!" Ethan persuaded the coach to give Elliot a chance.

"We might as well go ahead with the match. Our opponents are here. Otherwise they might think we are *chickening* out!"



Everyone laughed as Elliot went onto the field to play, but when they saw Elliot's soccer skills, they all cheered. Some spectators were blowing on their vuvuzelas. Ethan felt great, especially when they won the match and Elliot even scored two goals. Since then, Elliot became a part of the Riverside Rangers as the first ever soccer-playing chicken.





How Feathers found his soulmate

Tanique Williams

Helderkruin Primary
Grade 6
Age 11

Feathers and Cluck were partners and they loved each other no matter what. When his friend Cluck died, Feathers was very sad. One day, Feathers saw something beautiful across the road and wanted to find out what it was. Will he ever get across the road and find out who that creature is?

There once was a chicken called Feathers. For two years, he lived in a cage in a pet shop with his partner, Cluck. Feathers was tan in colour with a white ring of feathers around his neck. Cluck was black breasted and had a red beak, with a long tail and feathers edged with white.

They used to fight daily over the beautiful hens in other cages. They fought most of the time. As the days went by, Cluck got very sick. Feathers didn't understand the seriousness of the situation and just couldn't believe it when Cluck was taken out of the cage and never returned. Feathers waited for days, weeks and even months but Cluck never returned. He had no more hope.

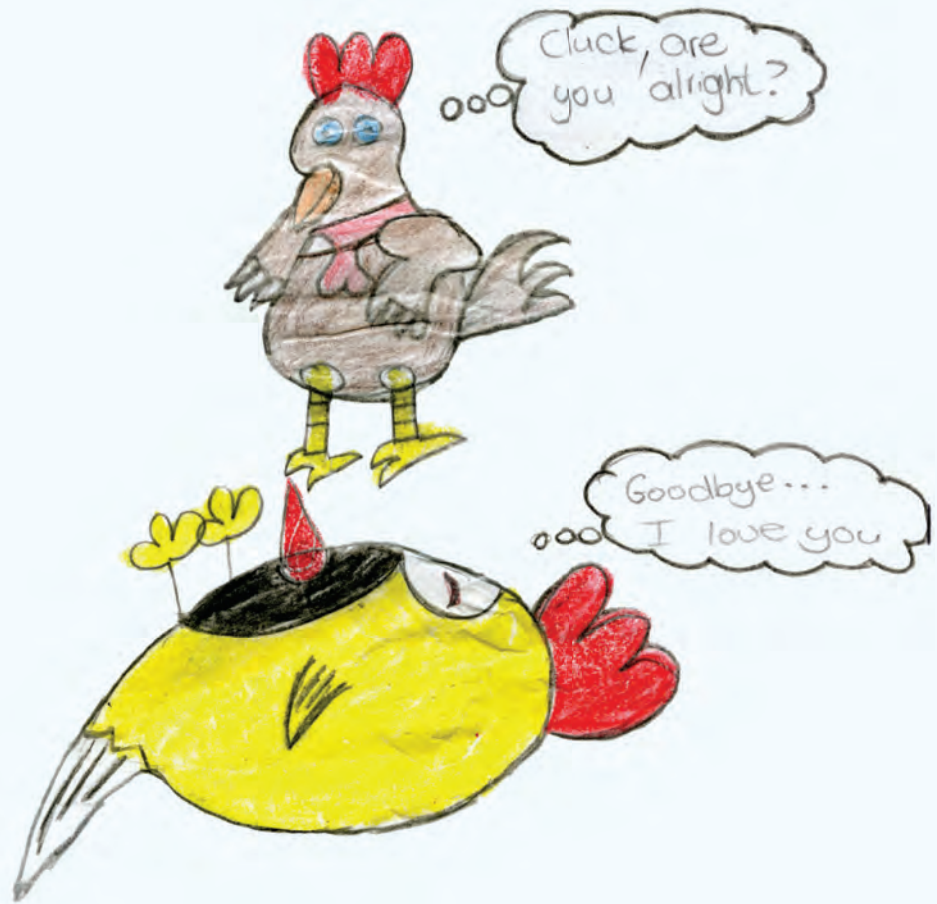
Years went by and Feathers went on with his life. He was so glad the owner moved him to the window. Now he could see the road. Every day, he would see people crossing the road. He had never seen such a lot of cars before. He would see how children threw tantrums for ice-cream.

Then his eye caught sight of the most beautiful creature ever. She had silky, white downy feathers and a greyish, blue beak. Every single day he watched her and so much wanted to cross the road to meet her. Luckily, the next



day was Operation Clean-up Day when all the cages were cleaned. Feathers' cage was filthy. It was full of stinky chicken poo and old pieces of food.

That night, Feathers dreamed of what he would find if he crossed the road. In his dream, he woke up, opened the cage and ran out. Just then, the owner of Pat's Pet Shop came and ran swiftly to get Feathers but he couldn't catch him. The owner just went back to the pet shop and was so exhausted that he needed to sit down. When Feathers crossed the road, he heard people talking about the new place, called KFC. They said that their chicken was the best and very famous. He also wanted people to talk about him that way. He went to the back entrance. He went in and saw people standing there with knives, killing chickens. As

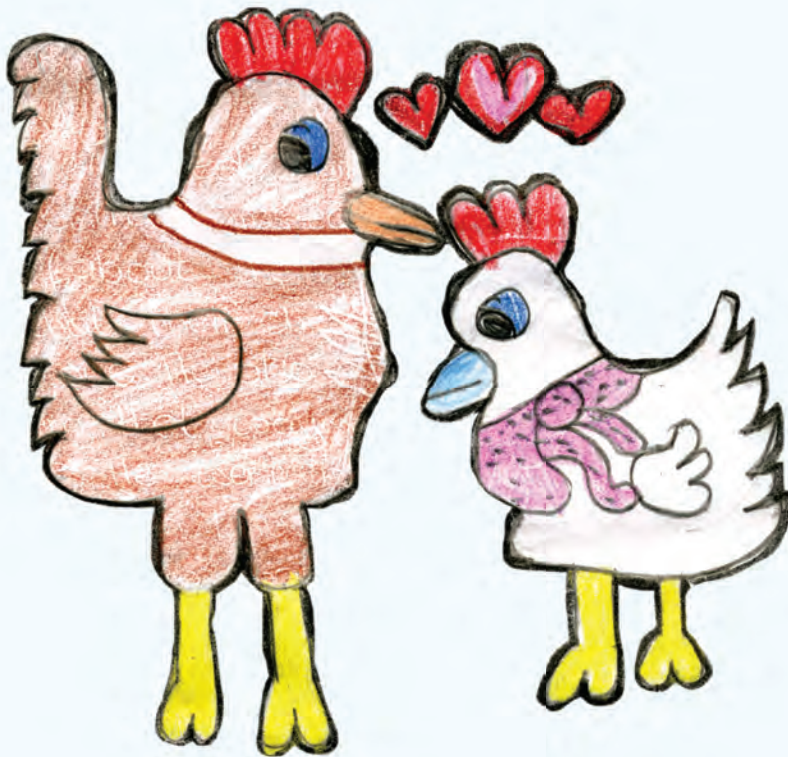


soon as he saw that, he rushed back to the pet shop and jumped back into his cage. It gave him such a 'wild whip' that he woke up.

It was Operation Clean-up Day, when the owner of Pat's Pet Shop came with a beautiful blue broom and a small silver scoop. They first started with Feathers' cage which was the dirtiest of all the cages. When the owner opened Feathers' cage, Feathers thought that it was either now or never. He made a run for it. He ran out of the pet shop and into the street. He told himself to run across the road. As he stepped onto the road, he saw a lot of cars, trucks and

buses. Feathers didn't know which way to go, so he went in all different directions until finally he was on the other side of the road. Just then, Feathers walked into another pet shop, and lo and behold, he bumped into the beautiful creature. She introduced herself as Gracie. They started communicating in their language.

The owner of Pat's Pet Shop went to fetch Feathers and also bought the female hen. He took both of them to the pet shop and put them into one cage. They started a family and lived happily ever after.





Spider trouble ...

Dené Nel

Belhar Primary
Grade 6
Age 11

The diamond ring vanished! A spider laid its eggs and left me with them! The sinister stranger is just another ... *person?*

Chapter 1 The ring

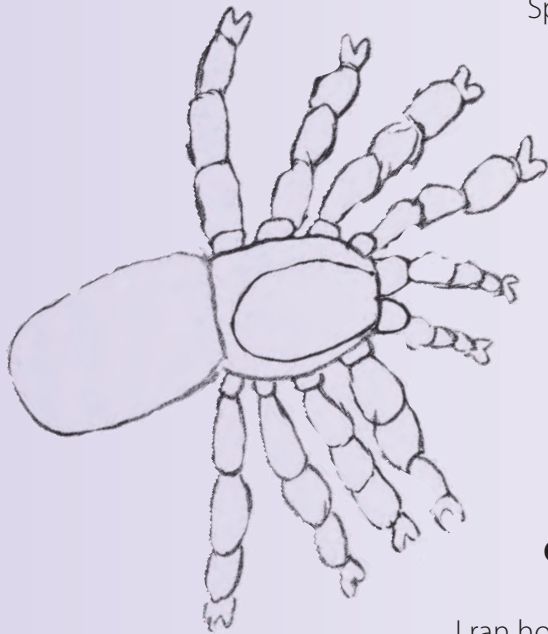
Gone! Vanished! Disappointed! How did it happen? My diamond-encrusted ring is gone! My grandmother will never forgive me for losing her most treasured possession. I don't know what to do! Oh no! Perhaps while looking for my pom-poms behind my dressing table the ring must have fallen off? The ring is gone!

As I searched for the ring behind the cupboard, I felt a warm, hairy, chubby thing! The next moment it was walking under my sleeve ... I ran out with the loudest scream ever! Out the door I ran! I stopped and saw a man dressed in black just staring at me! Closer and closer he came ... I tried walking away but he was already right behind me. BOO! he screamed and I fell down from shock! He opened his hand, as I looked into his hand, I saw the diamond-encrusted ring! How did he get it? I thought to myself. It was on my dressing table, right next to my bed! How ... how did he get it? Was he in the house while I was asleep or while I was at school? No! It can't be. When I ran back into the house, I looked out through the window but he had disappeared. As soon as I looked behind me, there he was, with his big eyes! I ran outside and stood next to the house so that he couldn't see me and all of a sudden the sun started to set and darkness fell upon the house!



Chapter 2 The spider bite

Something bit me and as I pulled up my sleeve there was this big yellow bump on my arm. I looked down at the ground and this fat, hairy spider stared at me! I ran into the house as quickly as a flash! As I locked all the doors, I knocked the big, yellow sore against the door knob and it burst open! Out came yellow pus and also so many spider eggs! Eeeww ... I felt a prickly, scratching feeling as the spiders grew. The eggs were ready to hatch. Oh no!



Spiders everywhere! Can you imagine? I had never felt so scared in my life. I didn't know what to do, it was like time and my life were frozen. My life was over! It was as if my house was a spider's web! I ran to school the next day and told my friends and educators but they didn't believe me! Then I showed them the eggs that were covering almost my whole arm. Mrs Jenner believed me then but the other educators didn't! So, I left things just like that.

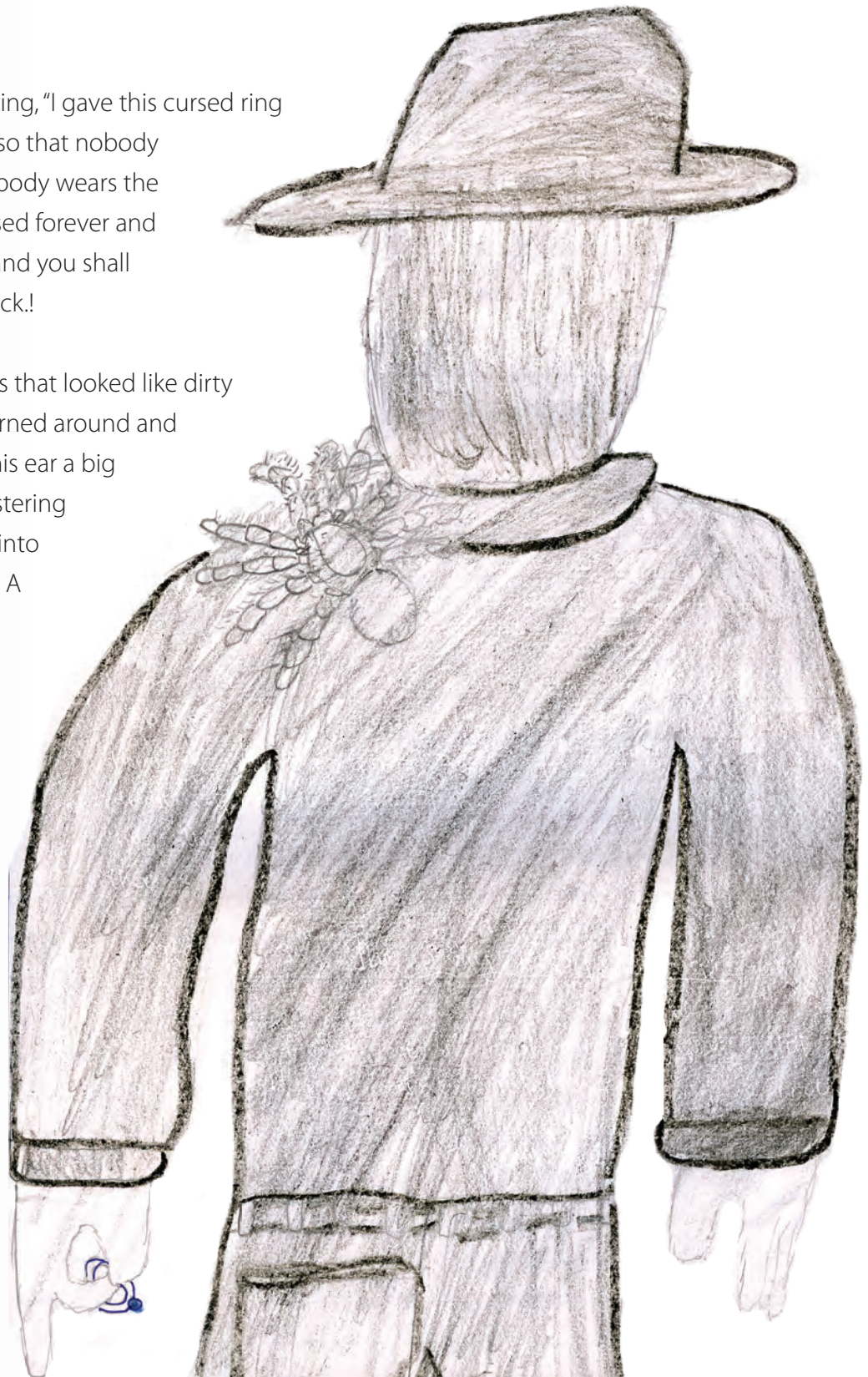
Chapter 3 The scary-looking stranger

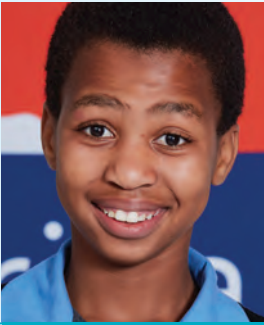
I ran home from school that day without stopping, scratching the horrible itch on my arm from the spider! All of a sudden darkness fell upon the house. I saw the sinister stranger again. He just stared at me!

Not knowing whether to run away or bravely walk up to him, I took a deep breath and with my heart pounding, I said, "Sir, what are you doing with my grandmother's ring?"

He answered me saying, "I gave this cursed ring to her to hide away, so that nobody would wear it! If anybody wears the ring they will be cursed forever and die a spidery death and you shall *never* get the ring back.!

With pitch-black eyes that looked like dirty pools of water, he turned around and walked away. From his ear a big black spider with glistening eyes crawled down, into the collar of his shirt. A cold chill ran down my spine and I froze in the suddenly cold, night air. The sinister stranger disappeared into the suddenly thick, cold, night air, never to be seen again ...





The mystery of the pencil

Esethu Khiva

Weltevreden Valley
Core Primary
Grade 6
Age 12

I have been asking myself the same questions all my life:
“Where do I come from?”
“Why do I have to live a hard life?”
“Am I valuable to the people who use me?”
And now I think I have answers to my questions.

Part 1 The beginning

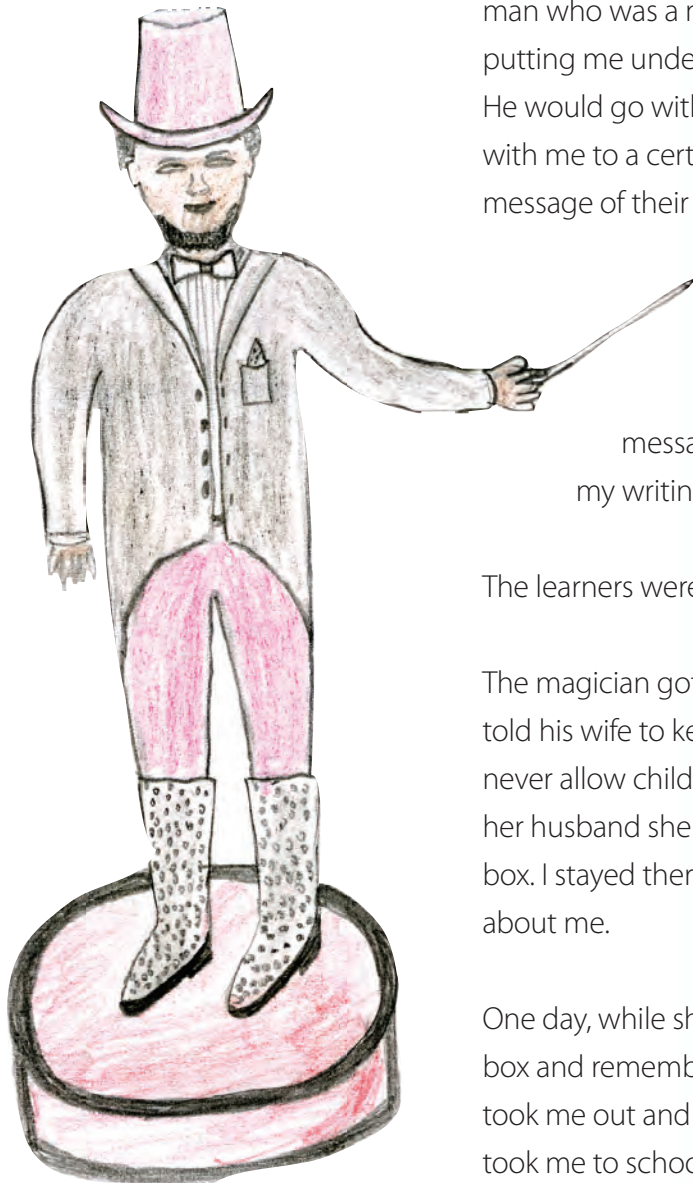
There were trees in a certain forest. One day, a terrible storm came and damaged the trees. Most of the trees were oak trees. They fell down and a group of shepherds in that area found them. When they started to cut these trees up, they saw a black substance. They thought it was coal, and since they always used coal in their homes, they gathered up all of the black substance and took it home. Later that day, they put it into their coal stoves, but to their surprise it did not burn.

The next day, as they gathered again, they talked about what they experienced. One of them said, “We can use this substance to make marks on our sheep.” They all became excited at this idea and one of them tried it and it worked. They named it Magic Powder. One of them suggested that they put this powder in wooden sticks and it worked perfectly. Ever since then they used this Magic Powder and their sheep were never stolen again. The news spread and one man who had a better understanding and knowledge took this substance and invented a pencil. He mixed the pencil’s powder with clay so that it was not too loose. He made more magic pencils and sold them to people.



Part 2 A life of a pencil

After being made, a life of misery began. First, I was sold to a man who was a magician. He performed different magic, like putting me under his arm. I would then turn into a long belt. He would go with me to different places. One day, he went with me to a certain school. He told the learners to write a message of their own.



After that he said, "I will not look at what you have written, but I will use this pencil in my hand to write the same message. I will of course know your message, and my writing will be the same as yours!"

The learners were shocked but it was the truth.

The magician got old after many years. Before he died, he told his wife to keep me in a safe place. He ordered her to never allow children to play with me. Because his wife loved her husband she never let anyone use me. I was kept in a box. I stayed there for about five years. The wife then forgot about me.

One day, while she was packing her belongings, she saw the box and remembered that she had kept a pencil in it. She took me out and gave me to her grandson. The grandson took me to school. I found out that children in class were loud and cruel. They screamed and played around without even taking care of me. In the class, there were many pencils, so the grandson had to mark me by biting me. He sometimes threw me on the ground and left me there for

hours. Eventually, the grandson got tired of me and threw me in a rubbish bin. I felt like I was buried, with no hope of being saved by anyone.

It was after a week that I heard a trash truck. I knew that I was going to be thrown away at a dump site. As predicted, I was there in a few seconds.

Now I was in a completely strange place, with rotten food, dead cats and dogs. I said to myself, "If only they knew the magic in me!"

Early one morning, an old man at the dump site, was looking for bottles and papers for recycling. As he was scratching, he found me and took me to his home. He gave me over to his young daughter who also took me to school. I began to think the pain and suffering was over But no! No! No! The process was long from over. Later that day, what I saw in my new owner's classroom terrified me. There was a big machine on the teacher's table that gave pencils haircuts. I heard them calling the machine Sharpener. Later that afternoon, my new owner shredded me in the machine. I braced myself as my head was plunged into the spinning blades of the machine. She shaved me and I had a terrible headache, as you can imagine. Finally, I was pulled free.

It was not too long after that, that I found myself in a big black bag among other pens and pencils. They were all different colours, sizes and shapes. Hours later, I heard the girl offering to lend me to her friend. I noticed that this friend was a boy. I knew that I was going to experience a harder life, with yet another boy. He took me and used me for a few

minutes. After that he put me under his books and I was not taken care of again.

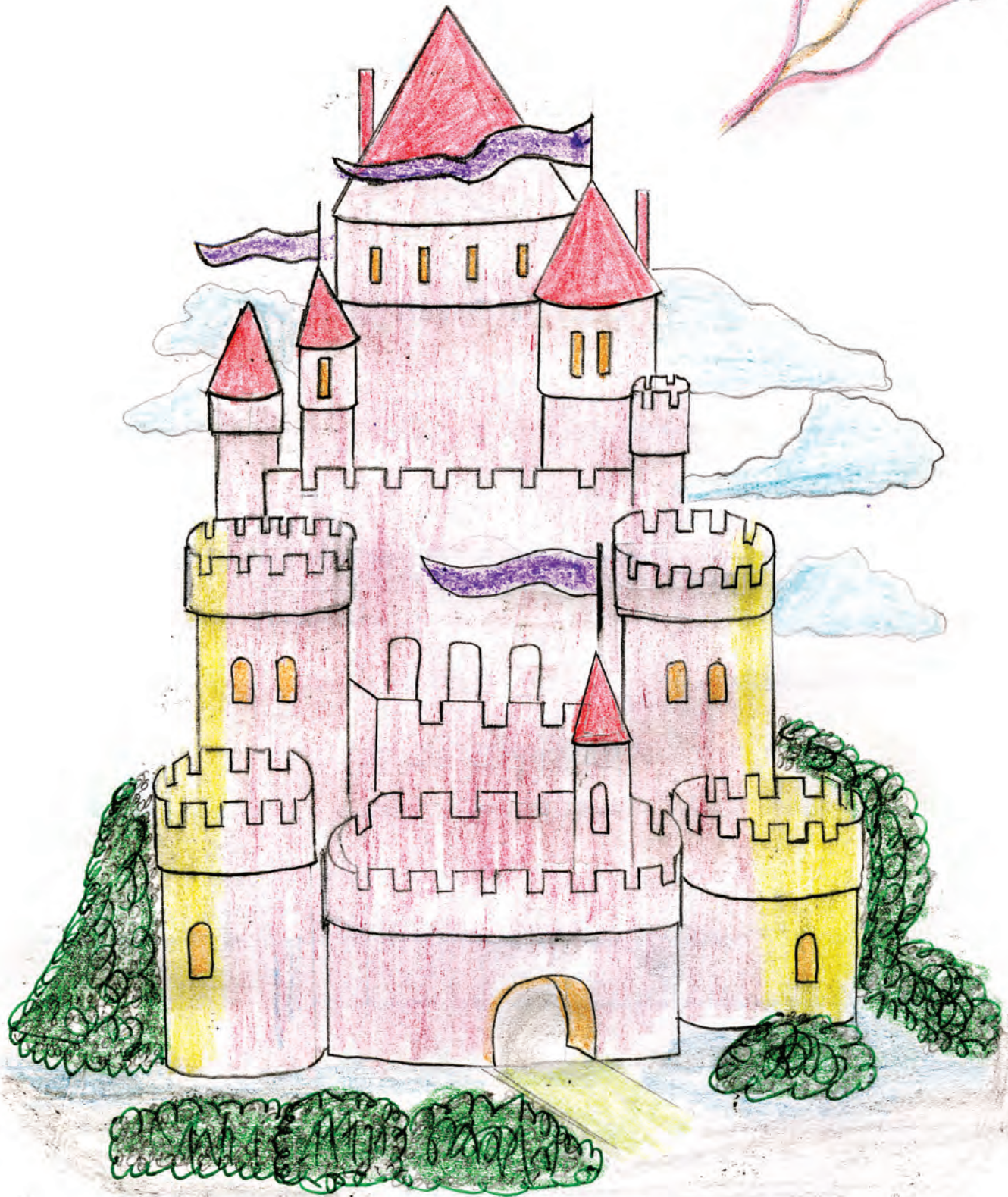
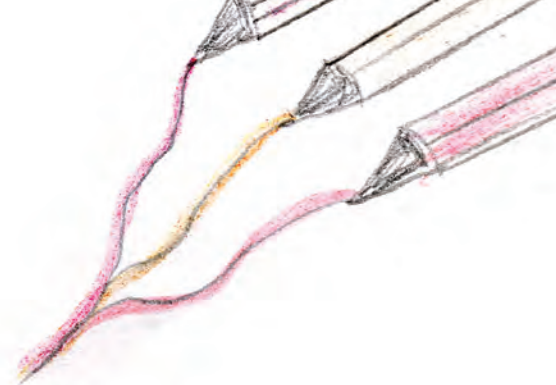
From all these painful experiences, I felt like a deer longing for streams of water. I just needed to do what I was renowned for.

Life started to change when I heard the teacher telling them about a drawing competition that would be taking place. The boy told his teacher that he wanted to be one of the contestants. From that day on, I was never kept in the dark. The boy took me out of a life of misery. I was in the light again. When the boy held me in his hands I started to feel warmth being transferred to me. He started to do a few sketches with me. After that, he put me inside his front shirt pocket and made sure that I was not lost. I felt his heartbeat and love.

The following day, he sat quietly and was thinking deeply as to what and how his drawing would be. Eventually, he took me out again and started to draw. While he was drawing he sang me a song:

*Draw little pencil, draw with me
Draw loving pencil, draw for me
I love you more than anything
So much more than anything
You are my strength
You are my brother and you are my friend.*

The magic in me began. The boy drew his dream house. It was fun and I was so happy to do magic.



A few weeks later, the results of the competition came out and were announced at assembly. All the teachers and learners were there and excited. Who would go home with a prize? Then the principal read out the final name ...

“Would Peter Nono please come to the stage?” she asked.

Peter thought there must be a mistake.

The principal said, “I am very pleased to give you, Peter, the prize for the best drawing.”

Peter got a big shiny cup and a cheque worth two thousand rand.

I smiled and said to myself, “Finally I have put a smile on somebody’s face!”

It was not too long after that, that Peter’s class was writing Mathematics, English, History and Geography tests. Peter wrote all the tests and they were told that the learners who got the highest marks would be rewarded. Peter knew that he was not good in any of his school subjects. Months later, all the parents were invited to school for the prize-giving ceremony. Peter told his mother that they should sit at the back, because he wouldn’t get any prizes. He knew that his marks were not high.

Peter’s mother said, “You never know,” soothing him.

Peter watched all the best learners getting prizes. Finally, the deputy principal called Peter’s name. She said she was



giving Peter the prize for achieving the highest marks in all four subjects. I was so proud to be a blessing to someone!

Peter said, "This is indeed a magic pencil!"

It is true when they say, "There is a light at the end of the tunnel." Well, I definitely saw the light, because ever since, I have not been put in darkness or ill-treated by a human. Remember, don't let anyone think less of you, because you are small. Don't lose hope. Instead, be the best you can be! Life will change, and be different. It is also true when they say, "You have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find your prince."

The moral of the story is this: don't let anyone look down on you and never lose hope. Instead, be the best you can be and your life will change.



Short, sharpen, sweet

Cleo Blom

Bellville South
Primary
Grade 6
Age 12

Who knew pencils were smart? They have exciting adventures without even looking for them. A pencil comes to life, it gets stolen. It falls into the toilet and ...



Chapter 1 The dream

Have you ever wondered what it feels like to be a pencil? Well, let me tell you something. Today, I woke up as a pencil. It started as a dream. Then it became real. When I woke up, I was *this*, with a strange colour, black and red stripes. On my body was written 'HB' and 'Made in Germany!' – totally weird!

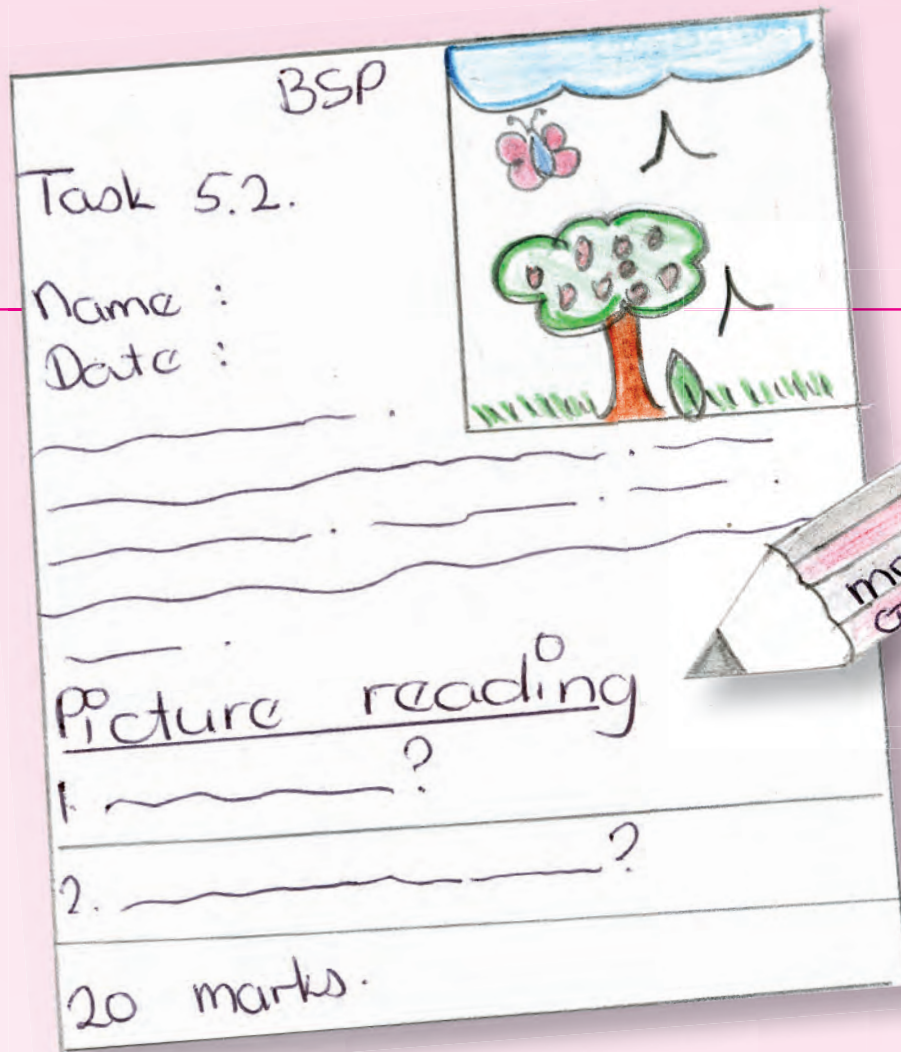
All of a sudden, I felt a hand touching me. I was put in a pencil case.

In the pencil case were more pencils, but they were all different colours. They told me that I was the most important pencil because I would be used the most.

Chapter 2 Meeting the world and entering blades

Among us there was a blue pen. He told me that it was not a good world out there. I thought it was going to be exciting. The only thing that I had a problem with was the fact that I could not eat, walk, run, see or hear.

Then I felt a hand clutching me. Everyone said that it was time for me to meet the world, and I was



ready. My eyeballs almost popped out of my head when I realised that I was approaching a blade or as the humans call it, 'the sharpener'. Blades are my enemy! It would probably feel like something was trying to break through my skin. I was horrified.

I got sharpened. When I came out, I felt fresh, because I had the sharpest point in the pencil case.



Chapter 3 Writing a test

Usually, I had to think for a test, but this time I did not have to. I just did the writing, and sometimes I could check what others had written. One of the best things was the fact that I could not hear any teachers or children shouting.

When I was not writing a test, I just lay on the desk. The first time I fell off the desk I thought I had broken my arms and legs, but then I realised that I didn't have any! I got used a lot.

Chapter 4 Getting stolen

The learner who was writing with me had to go somewhere. Once again, I fell on the ground. The learner next to our seat picked me up. If I was a human, I would say he kidnapped me. I knew this because the person's hand was very cold. That cold hand hid me. I was terrified, because I did not know what was going to happen to me.

Every day, things like this happened. There's always someone who steals in class. I did not have eyes to see who stole me, but I could feel the fast movement of someone wanting to hide me.

Luckily, I fell out of the kidnapper's pocket and my owner retrieved me from the floor.

Chapter 5 Waking up

As a pencil, I went through a lot of weird adventures that day, like falling into a toilet, into dirty water, breaking while poking a hole in the desk, and entering blades. Suddenly icy, cold water splashed over my sharp pointed graphite face. I was so cold!

I woke up. I was elated when I realised it was only a dream. I learned a valuable lesson. A pencil goes through a lot – more than people do. We are the cause of their problems. A pencil has feelings, too. It keeps on getting hurt by people when they lose or break it.





Saved by an orphan!

Karla Vermeulen

Silverstream Primary
Grade 4
Age 9

Deep in the forest lived a happy, royal family. One stormy evening, Princess Beth's precious ring was stolen out of the castle. Amy played detective, to find the stolen ring ...



There was once a beautiful castle on top of the biggest hill. Princess Beth, King Arthur and Knight Eric lived there. Queen Elizabeth died from a severe illness.

One stormy, windy evening the castle was robbed by a sinister stranger. He sprayed a sleeping spray into the castle, so everyone fell into a deep, deep sleep. The evil, dangerous stranger knew that Princess Beth had inherited Queen Elizabeth's precious diamond ring. The ring was hidden in a glass case in a special room of the castle. The ring was loved, precious, beautiful and expensive.

Amy, an orphan village girl, saw a big white horse chasing the sinister stranger. The sinister stranger went into a cottage and hid the ring in a box and locked it in a safe.

Amy played detective to get the ring back. She went into the cottage where she saw terrible, enormous, scary spiders. She had a fear of spiders and was almost shocked to death. Then Amy's dog, Rex, started to bark and attacked the dangerous man who then ran out and locked them in the cottage. They were trapped! Each time Amy saw a creepy spider, she screamed very loudly, because she was afraid.





Amy and Rex searched for the ring. Rex sniffed when he saw the safe. Amy saw it too. They tried to open the safe, but they couldn't get it open. Amy saw an axe and started to chop the safe open. Suddenly it opened and Amy took out the ring and put it in her pocket. They escaped through the window.

When Amy and Rex were outside, they saw the sinister stranger cutting wood. The stranger saw them. He had a log in his hand and ran towards Amy because he wanted to hit Amy with the log but Rex would not allow that to happen. Rex bit the stranger's ankles and they started to bleed. He ran far away and was never seen again. Amy ran to the castle and returned the ring.

The king adopted Amy. She was no longer an orphan, but a princess.





Flowers in Manhattan

Toufeeqah Carelse

Delft Primary
Grade 5
Age 10

As legend would have it, sad memories and grief after the destruction caused by the earthquake in Manhattan were eased by the blooming of yellow roses on the first day of Spring, which brings the otherwise grey city back to life. Residents are filled with joy and happiness and when this day passes they look forward to the following year, when these roses will bloom again.

The Upper East Side of Manhattan, a busy city with its sophisticated architecture, shops and restaurants. A place tourists like to visit. A place where rich people do their shopping, hang out in restaurants and sophisticated clubs. No hungry beggars! No hungry cats or dogs! You can see and smell the money.

It is just another day as morning breaks over the city. There is a slight breeze, and as the sun rises, it becomes brighter, covering the city in a golden glow. Between the tall buildings and along the sidewalks, there is a bank of yellow roses. These roses, together with the bright sun give Manhattan a special glow.

Throughout the year, there is no sign of these roses but today is a very special day. It is the first day of Spring. As the legend goes, this is the day magical roses appear bringing their joyful energy to everyone walking in the streets. Some people believe in the legend of the yellow roses and others think it is just a myth. No-one knows for sure. The secret is to believe that the magical powers of these roses will bring you happiness and good fortune throughout the year, once they start to blossom.

A sweet scent hangs in the air and slowly spreads down



the street. The tall, grey buildings come alive with people opening windows to enjoy their sweet freshness. Even in the tallest buildings, people stare down at the roses to admire their beauty, letting the roses brighten up their day.

Today, many people in Manhattan gather in the streets and on the sidewalks to see the roses blossom. No one seems to be in a hurry because they know they only have this

one day to refresh their minds and souls with the joy and peace that the roses bring. They can feel how their sadness vanishes in the sweet air with every breath they take.

They can feel the new joyful energy flowing through their veins, bringing happy smiles to their faces, no matter what a sad or horrible day they had. Despite Manhattan being a busy city with many tourists travelling through it every day, many people still manage to find the time to stop and admire this natural beauty so they can find peace and harmony.

As people walk down the street and on the sidewalk they just have to stop to admire the beauty of the roses. You can hear people having happy conversations and discussing this magical appearance and their belief around it.

You can hear people whispering, "It is just a myth!"

People who strongly believe, tell the story that the city was once struck by a terrible earthquake. Buildings tumbled down and many people died. Parents walked around with dead children in their arms, sobbing uncontrollably.

At that moment, a flower fairy passed by and saw the terrible sadness and grief. She made a promise that once a year, on the first day of Spring, she would bless the city with a street full of yellow roses to remind them that you can have joy and peace in spite of bad things that happen to you.

You must just take the time to fill your heart with the

energy of it. You must just take the time to choose it.

When night falls, the roses and the joyful energy they magically bring disappear. The people of Manhattan are very sad when these roses disappear. All they wish for is for the roses to come back and brighten their day. They look forward to the following year when these roses will bloom again.





Crossing the boundary fence

Lilitha Gcinisiko

Liwa Primary
Grade 5
Age 11

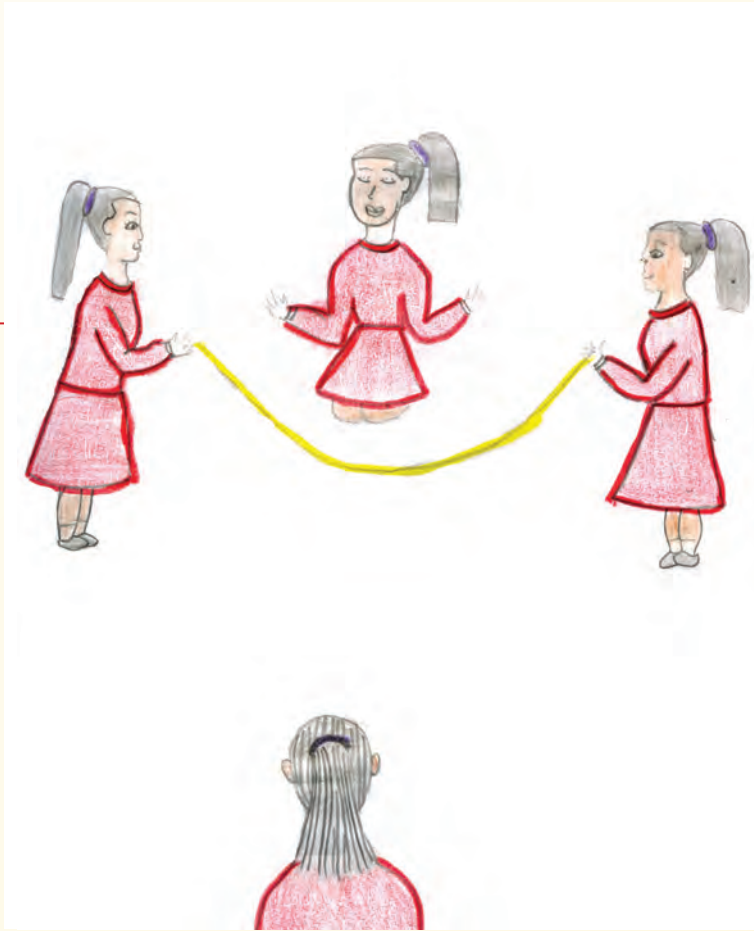
Anitha grew up with a single mother who did not value reconciliation at all. Her mother indoctrinated her to have a negative attitude towards other races. Anitha went beyond her mother's teaching and crossed the boundary fence.

It's extremely difficult these days, when the cost of living is rising, to be raised by a single parent. This is exactly what happened to Anitha. Her father left for Joburg in search of greener pastures when she was only six. Her father never came back. He used to write to them but suddenly, when she was nine, he stopped.

It took both of them some time to realise what had happened to him. They waited patiently for him day in and day out. Every day, they would sit outside waiting for the postman, expecting a letter from him, but no letter came. With every knock on their two-roomed shack, they expected him to drop in, but that was never to be. Life was really becoming unbearable for them.

Anitha was really a star at school. She was an extremely hard worker who got joy from good results. Despite her problems at home, she was committed to her schoolwork. She was also a star in sports and above all she was obedient. She was really an angel from the Lord. She was a marvel to work and associate with.

Asemahle, Anitha's mother, though not educated, highly valued her child's education. She was poor but she did not want her child to go the same route. She wanted all the



best for her. As a religious person, she always prayed for her. Asemahle was a domestic worker whose salary was hardly enough to cover the basic expenses for the two of them. She lived from hand to mouth but she prioritised her child's education.

Asemahle was one of those people who did not value the concept of reconciliation or live in peace with all races. She was so sceptical about whites. To her they were all racists who only treated blacks as mere servants. She told her child this on a daily basis to such an extent, that as Anitha grew up, she believed what her mother said. Asemahle would

always tell her child not to befriend whites. Marrying them, according to Asemahle, was taboo. She deeply cultivated these thoughts in her child's mind. As a child, Anitha viewed the world through her mother.

When Anitha passed Grade 7 with flying colours her mother was so happy that she promised to take her to a good school in town. She was not really serious about it, but Anitha kept pressurising her. Asemahle then found her a place at a very good school in Cape Town. Anitha was looking forward to her first day at her new school. Things did not, however, go as per her expectations.

She suddenly found herself to be lonely. She was no longer the celebrity she was at her local township school. This was not because there were no other learners to talk to but it was because of what her mother had cultivated in her. The school was multi-racial with blacks, coloureds and whites. Christians, Muslims and non-believers were also among them. Anitha found herself hating anyone who was not black. She also found that she could not easily associate with the blacks who were at the school with her. She ended up a lonely child.

Things started to take a new twist, when a boy by the name of Luke noticed that she was a lonely girl and befriended her. Luke was a rich, white, spoiled boy who had everything. Anitha did not trust him at first and she tried to ignore him. One day, they were grouped together for an assignment and there was no option of running away from him. They had to work together.

They talked very little on this assignment. After thirty minutes, the assignment was done. Nothing changed Anitha's mind. She still had the same perception about whites.

Her mother's words kept on coming into her head. Anitha felt like she had disappointed her mother by mixing ... with this white boy. What would her mother say if she found out she was doing an assignment with this white boy? However, deep inside her she knew that she had done nothing wrong. In the new SA, race does not count. She vividly remembered her History teacher, teaching them this. When she got home, she felt guilty but she did not show it. Part of her said there was nothing wrong.

Anitha was not sure whether it was by coincidence or if it was fate when she found she was yet again paired with Luke in another assignment. This time in a different subject. Were her teachers aware of what her mother had taught her about embracing whites? She wanted to tell her teacher that she did not want to work with Luke but something inside her told her not to. She arranged to meet Luke after school.

She dreaded the time they were going to meet. When it was time, she hesitated going but she had no option. Eventually she pulled herself up and moved towards their meeting point. On arrival, Luke was already there and he warmly welcomed her with a smile. He gave her a chair to sit on. He opened his school bag and offered some muffins to Anitha.



She thought twice before taking them. Luke noticed the uneasiness in her but did not ask. He just shoved the muffins into her school bag.



That day was a better day compared to the previous time they worked together. Anitha was able to pour out her ideas. In no time, they had raised a lot of ideas about their assignment. They even had time to share some issues about their personal lives. They found that they shared a lot in common, for example, their favourite movies, books and games. They parted ways with a promise to meet the following day at breaktime.

The two started spending breaktime together. They really enjoyed each other's company. People could see the two of them sharing lunch. Luke really enjoyed the traditional food that Anitha brought. Anitha also liked the nice food he brought. She would keep some so that she could show it off to her friends in the location. Other pupils started talking, thinking the two were in love.

There were a lot of people who disapproved of the friendship. Asemahle was totally against it. She saw her child as a rebel who had crossed a line. She even took away the phone she had bought Anitha so that she could not chat with Luke. Despite the pressure from her mother to stop befriending the white boy, Anitha did not stop. She really wanted to show her mother that there was nothing wrong, for we are all equal and the same whether black, white, coloured or Indian.

One day, Anitha cried the whole night because her mother had told her that there was no way she could visit Luke. She had been looking forward to this visit but her mother did not give permission. She locked herself in her room and did not even eat supper. Her mother tried hard to make her feel better but in vain. All she wanted was to go and meet her friend's family. The following day, when her mother went to work, Anitha got a chance to see her friend and his family.

The whole family was so friendly. They all wanted to talk to her and made her feel welcome. Anitha saw the other side was not her mother's side. Her mother was totally wrong and old fashioned. White people are as good as black people. When it was time to go back, they showered Anitha with gifts. She had a lot of clothes, toys, books and a new phone. Luke's family offered to take her home. She did not want them to do so, for she knew her mother was going to be angry. They insisted on accompanying her home. She had to finally give in but she knew what awaited her.

On arrival at her home, her mother was already there. Once she knocked, she saw the look on her mother's face and knew something was wrong. Her mother was surprised to see all of the white *eKasi*. She was however surprised to see her mother welcoming them with a smile. She even invited them to come into their two-bedroomed shack. Anitha never thought Luke's parents would come in. Another surprise also was that they all got inside and settled themselves on a sofa that was there.

Her mother made coffee for them. She was also talking nicely to them in her broken English. Luke's family seemed



to be happy. Luke was enjoying himself, as he showed his friend how to use her phone she was given as a gift. Outside, neighbours were peeping through the windows trying to figure out why the white people were at Anitha's place. They knew how Anitha's mother talked about them, her hatred. By the time they left, the whole neighbourhood was outside. Luke's mother invited Anitha's mother to their home the following weekend. She was sceptical at first but when Luke's mother insisted she gave in.

As soon as they left, Asemahle started shouting at her daughter. She fell short of beating her. She claimed that she had brought her bad luck by bringing them home. She claimed she was going to see a traditional healer (sangoma) the following day to cleanse her home of the bad omen. Anitha, calm as she was throughout her mother's moment of madness, told her not to for they were people just like them. Asemahle did not seem convinced.

Anitha gave her mother a history lecture on reconciliation. She mentioned that reconciliation was ushered in by Tata Mandela. She knew that mentioning that name would change her mother's mind, for she admired him a lot. By the time they called it a day, Anitha's mother was somehow convinced and promised to visit Luke's family.

They were smartly dressed the next Saturday, ready for their visit. At exactly 10 am Luke's brother, John, came to fetch them. (He had heard a lot of bad stories in locations. He feared for his life but he fell in love with Anitha's family the first time he saw them.)

It was a lovely day for the two families. Anitha's mother got another view of the world through this association. She learned a lot and really felt at home with people of a different race. All her suspicions disappeared. It was all thanks to her daughter, who had decided to cross the boundary line and go against her mother's will.

This visit culminated in many social visits between the two families who learned a lot and appreciated each other's culture, values, ethos and ways of living. Anitha's family was the new talk of the neighbourhood. They did not understand the relationship, but Anitha's mother surprised them one day when she told them in no uncertain terms that race did not matter. A changed Asemahle.

"What really caused her to change?" they all quizzed.

One day, she heard them speaking behind her back as she was walking with her daughter. She stopped and boldly told them that the community should all learn from her brave daughter who went against her mother's wishes to view the world differently. She told them Anitha had associated with whites against her will, but now that had opened her mind.

"Colour, race, religion or culture doesn't matter" she said. "We are all human beings who are all equal," she continued. "Let's all unite and work together," she concluded.





Don't bite, just write

Logan Carelse

Balvenie Primary
Grade 5
Age 11

My name is Peter. I am a pencil. One day, I found myself waking up in a pencil factory next to the rest of my pencil family. Soon we would unknowingly be going to be separated into different parts of an exciting but dangerous world. I had no idea where I would end up.

My dream is to become a writer. I was born to flow in style, and words come to me like magic.

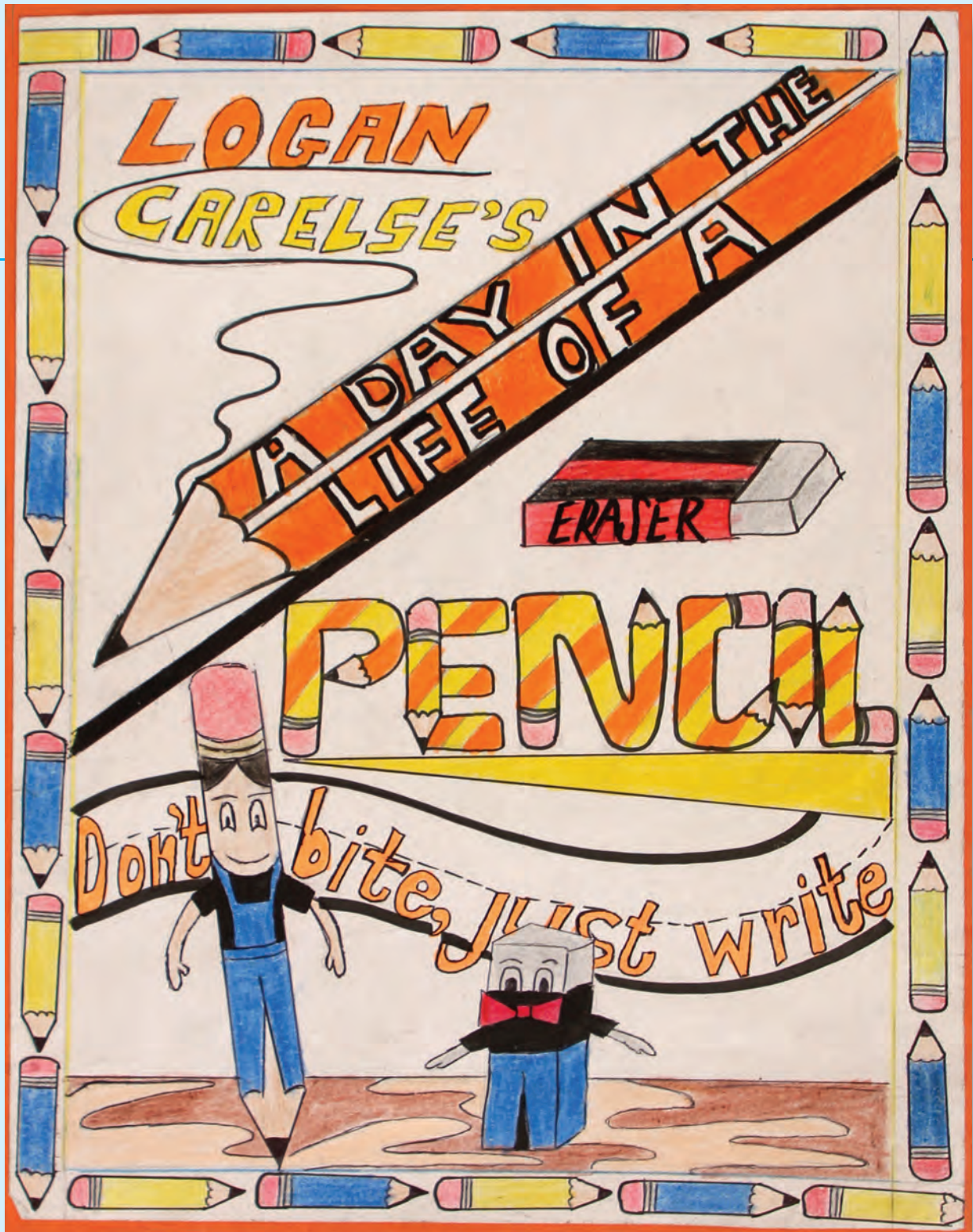
My name is Peter. This is a day in my life.

I am a pencil and I have feelings just like you. I laugh when I am happy and cry when I am sad and most of all I get hurt very easily and it's painful. Yes, painful. I can experience physical pain. So, don't bite me. I was born to be written with.

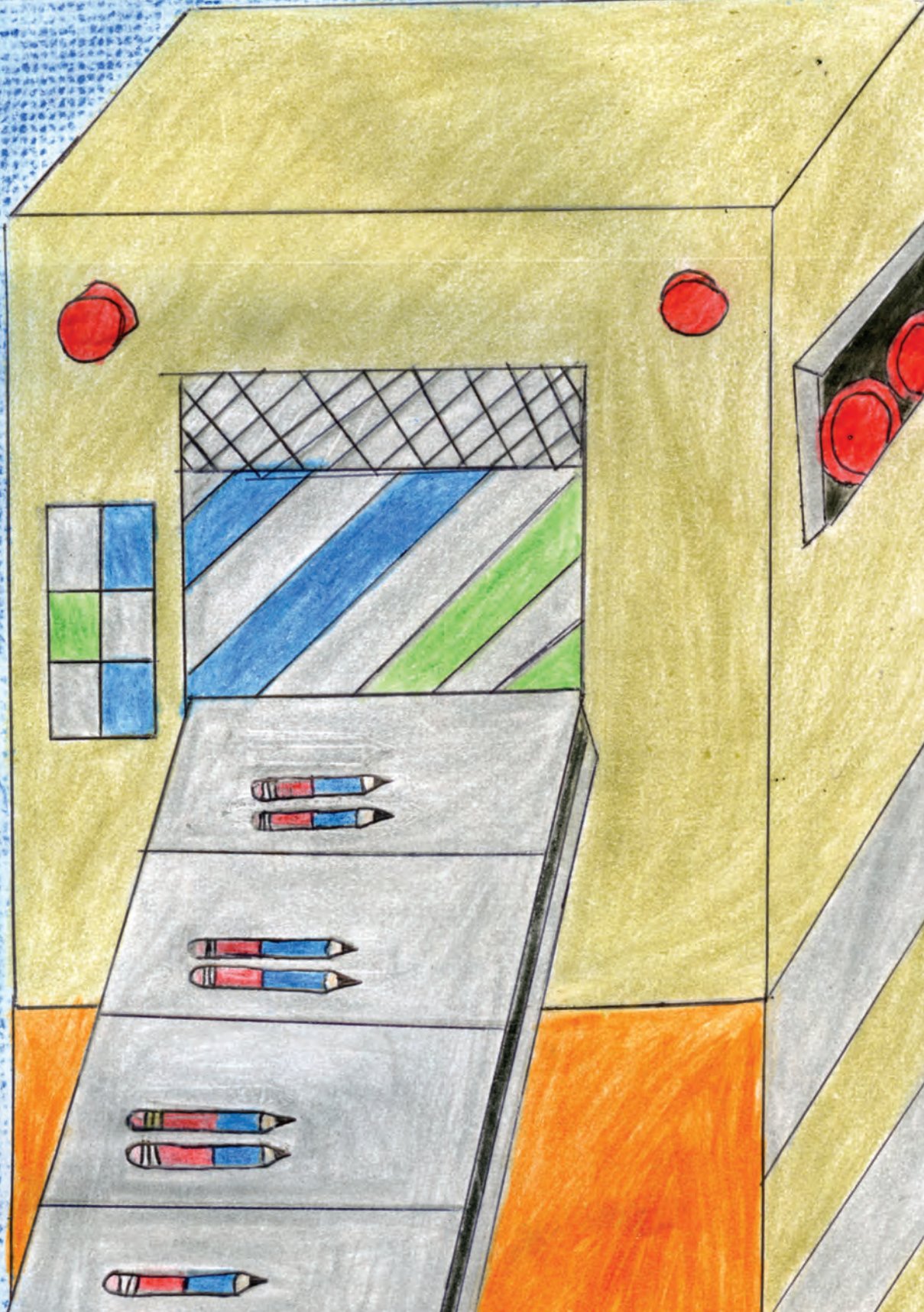
I found myself waking up in a factory, next to the rest of my clan. I saw lots of machines and they were noisy, but not deafening. I was moving on a conveyer belt, brand new, colourfully dressed and shining from head to toe. Or, should I rather say from eraser to nib? At the end of the conveyer belt, we were removed by numerous hands and placed in a big, plastic container and then carried to another area of the huge factory. There, we were gently taken from the big, plastic container and packed in small but cosy boxes in families of ten.

Then all the boxes were loaded into a big van. It was my first time travelling and I loved it.

"Woohoo!" everyone in the box shouted when we went up and down over the hills and bridges.



Pencil Factory



“What an amazing experience. This is the good life!” shouted one of my cousins.

We were then delivered at a stationery shop where we were carefully unpacked. It was here that I became very sad, because I was taken away from my family. We were all put into new stationery packs, each pencil with an eraser.

This is where I met Ernie, the eraser. “Hello, I’m Ernie,” he said with a smile. I was so sad but Ernie’s sparkling personality changed my mood.

“Hello, I’m Peter, Peter the pencil,” I said.

Just then we heard a lady speaking: “Do you have any good pencil and eraser sets?” she asked the shop assistant.

“We’ve got some good quality ones that came in, just now,” he replied in a kind and gentle voice. Taking the packaged container of Ernie and me, he said: “I can sell you this very good quality set. They are a match made in heaven!”

The lady paid for us, put us in her handbag and then we went with her in her beautiful, silver car. It was another new travelling experience for me. The car smelled fresh and clean. I was in a happy space.

It turned out that this lady was a primary school teacher and she took us out in her classroom. What a beautiful room, with colourful educational posters. She put us in a small drawer in her desk. It was



a clean and very nice room for us, with only a few other items of stationery. I was in a happy place. I was happy.

Then the children entered the classroom. They were Grade 5 learners. Some of them looked so kind and friendly. They walked behind one another in a straight row, but there was one boy who terrified me. He had curly black hair and pushed the learners walking in front of him out of the row when the teacher was not watching. This really scared me; it scared us.

“Ma’am!” a girl shouted. “Freddie is pushing me again!”

“Freddie, stop that this instant!” said the teacher.

Ernie and I were relaxing on the table when we witnessed this. I just hoped and prayed that our paths would never cross. Then, it happened. The teacher got angry, so angry that she shouted at the boy, who was constantly distracting and disturbing the other learners.

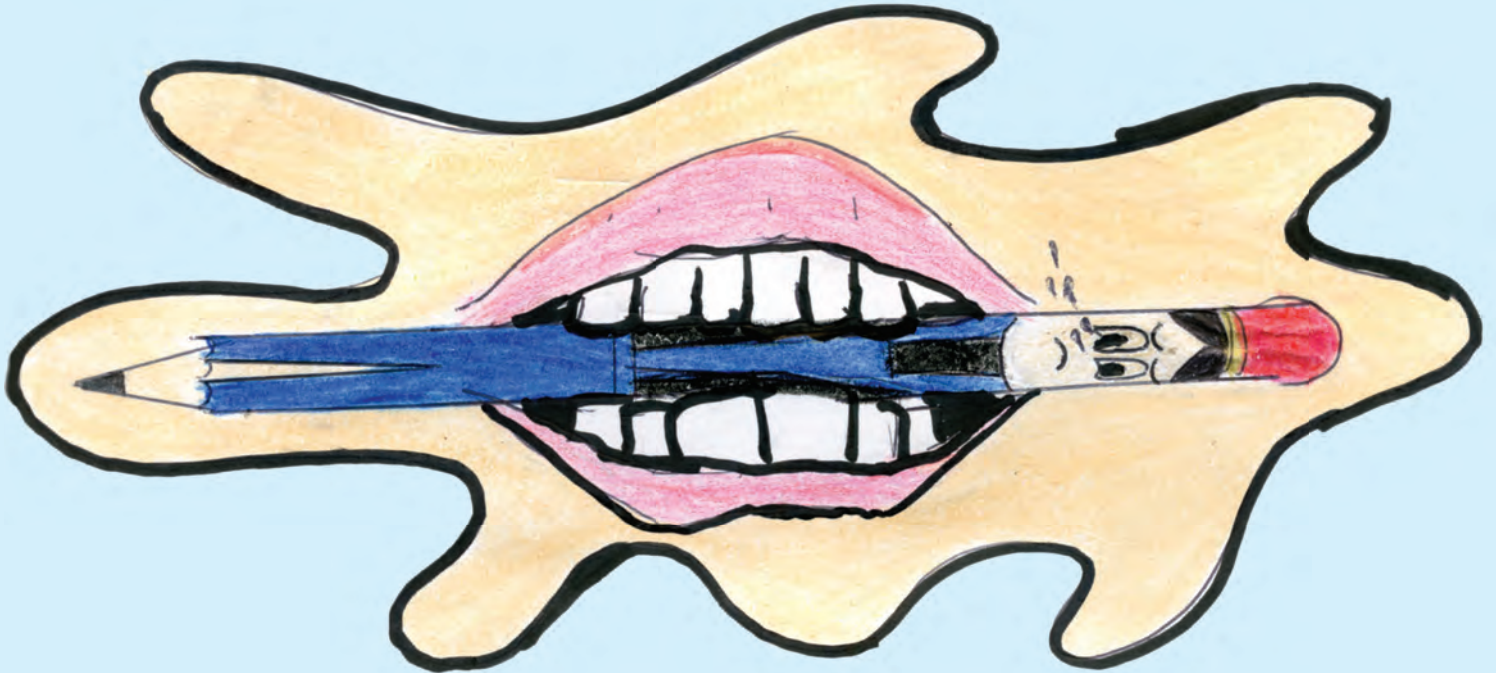
“What is the problem? Why are you not doing your work?” The teacher stared at Freddie with a serious face.

“He does not have a pencil again!” shouted a little girl.

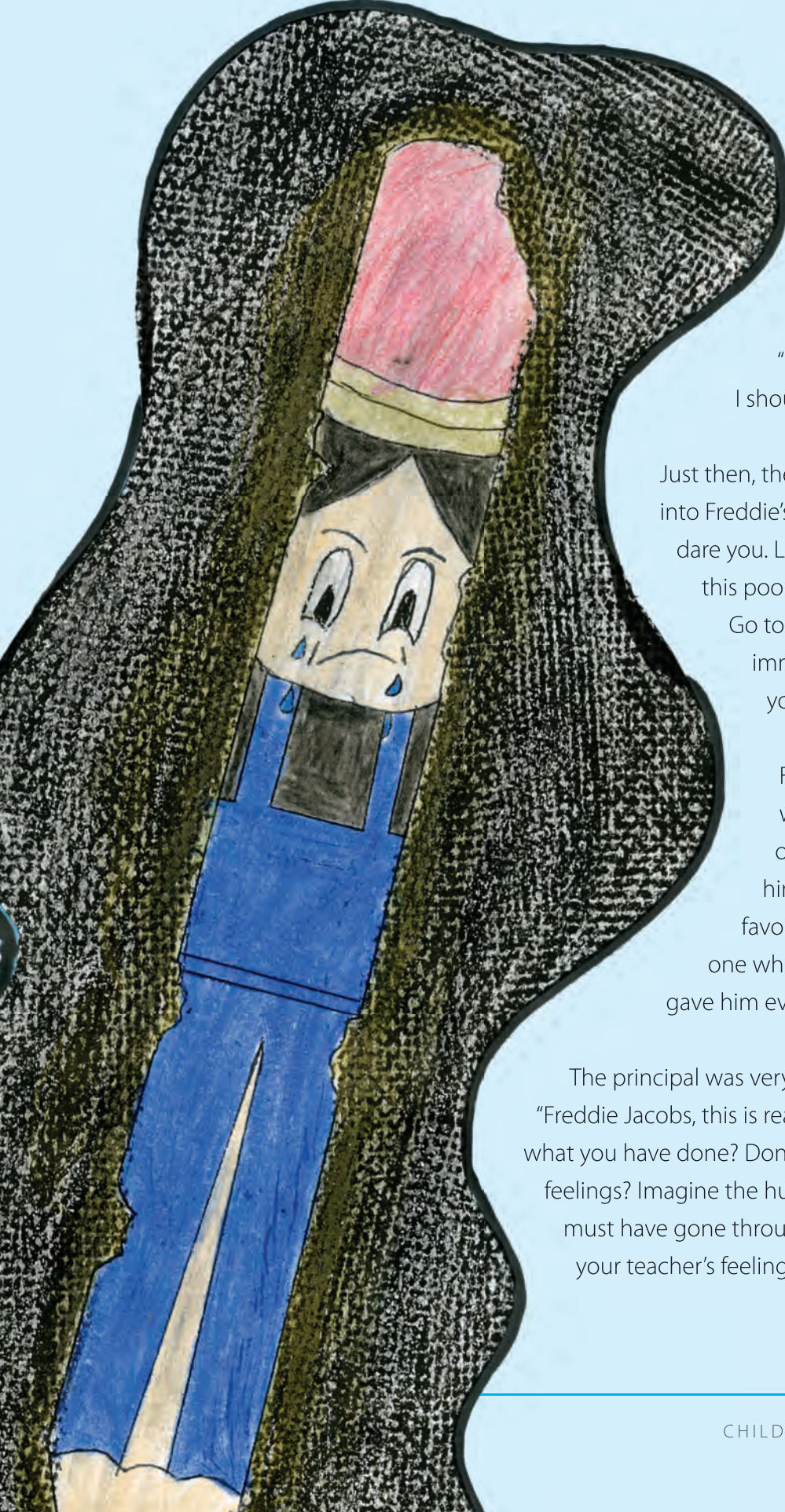
Somehow, a feeling of fear filled my whole, long pencil body. I started to shake. The teacher walked towards us and gently lifted me off the table. I was sure that she felt the trembling and nervousness in me.

“Here, use my pencil,” she said.

I quivered with fear, so the boy held me with a tight grip. I felt as if I could not breathe as he started to write with me, pushing my nib hard onto the page so that it made hard, intense and very dark writing on the paper. I was in pain as he pushed me across the lines, because his handwriting was untidy and illegible. My worst nightmare had just begun.



Then the teacher took a smaller group of learners to do reading with them. I was screaming inside. No one could hear me, except for Ernie, but he could do nothing but watch. When the teacher was busy with the small group, Freddie stopped writing again. He put me in his mouth and I could feel him biting my head. Then he put my whole body in his mouth and I saw the teeth coming down on me, enclosing me in his scary mouth. He bit me very hard.



I screamed in pain. It was awful. I couldn't wait for break. I wished this teacher would take me from him.

"Please, somebody, *save me!*"
I shouted.

Just then, the teacher looked up, straight into Freddie's face and said: "Freddie, how dare you. Look at what you've done to this poor pencil. You are disrespectful. Go to the principal's office immediately and show him what you have done."

Freddie took the pencil and walked to the principal's office feeling so ashamed of himself. He had disappointed his favourite teacher in the world. The one who cared for him. The one who gave him everything he needed.

The principal was very angry with Freddie. He said, "Freddie Jacobs, this is really sad to me. Do you know what you have done? Don't you think that this pencil has feelings? Imagine the hurt and pain that this pencil must have gone through. Imagine how you hurt your teacher's feelings."

This made Freddie feel even worse. "I am sorry, Sir. I didn't mean to hurt my teacher or damage the pencil. I didn't think sir."

The principal took the pencil and said: "From now on, this pencil is mine and I shall repair it. I think the pencil needs to go to the pencil hospital and have medical treatment, just like you would receive medical treatment if you were sick or injured."

Freddie felt so bad, that he promised never to bite another pencil again and from that day on, I lived in the principal's office. Here, no child could ever bite me again. I was so happy because the teacher sent Ernie to the office as well. So Ernie and I lived together in pencil heaven.





The mysterious note

Mugammad Niyaz Barnes

Helderkruijn Primary
Grade: 4
Age 9

Illustrated by
Haily Groep and
Mugammad Niyaz
Barnes

Niyaz is a nine-year-old boy who has been bullied many times. One night, lightning struck and strange things started to happen ...

My name is Niyaz. I've been bullied. Children picked on me, took my lunch, even forced me to do things I didn't want to do ... until one dark and gloomy Sunday night.

Lightning started to strike and there was a thunderstorm. I was so scared I couldn't sleep. Then I took my blanket and hid under my bed. I pulled my blanket over my head and fell asleep. Then I had this really *weird dream* ...

I dreamt that my window was still open and that I climbed through it to go outside. I stood outside in the dark and got struck by lightning. My body started to shake uncontrollably and I grabbed my head with both my hands. As the lightning subsided, my body calmed down. I turned around and just like someone sleepwalking, I returned to my room and went to sleep.

The next morning, I woke up. Everything was quiet, so I got out from under my bed. I felt strange and couldn't shake the feeling I had in my dream.

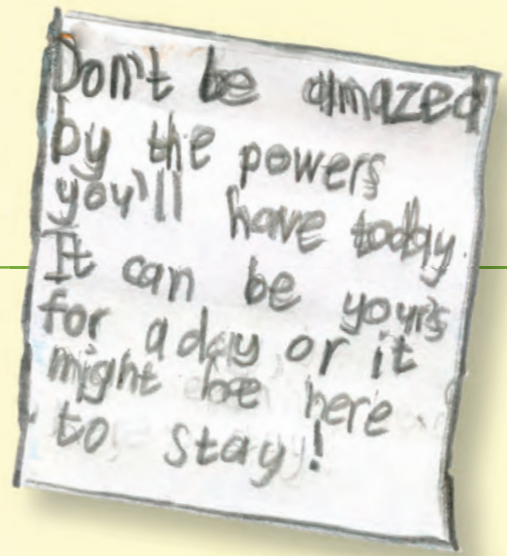
Suddenly, I felt an urge to go to my window. I opened the curtains and noticed that the sky was clear. Then I saw that my window was open. "Am I still dreaming?" I wondered. I

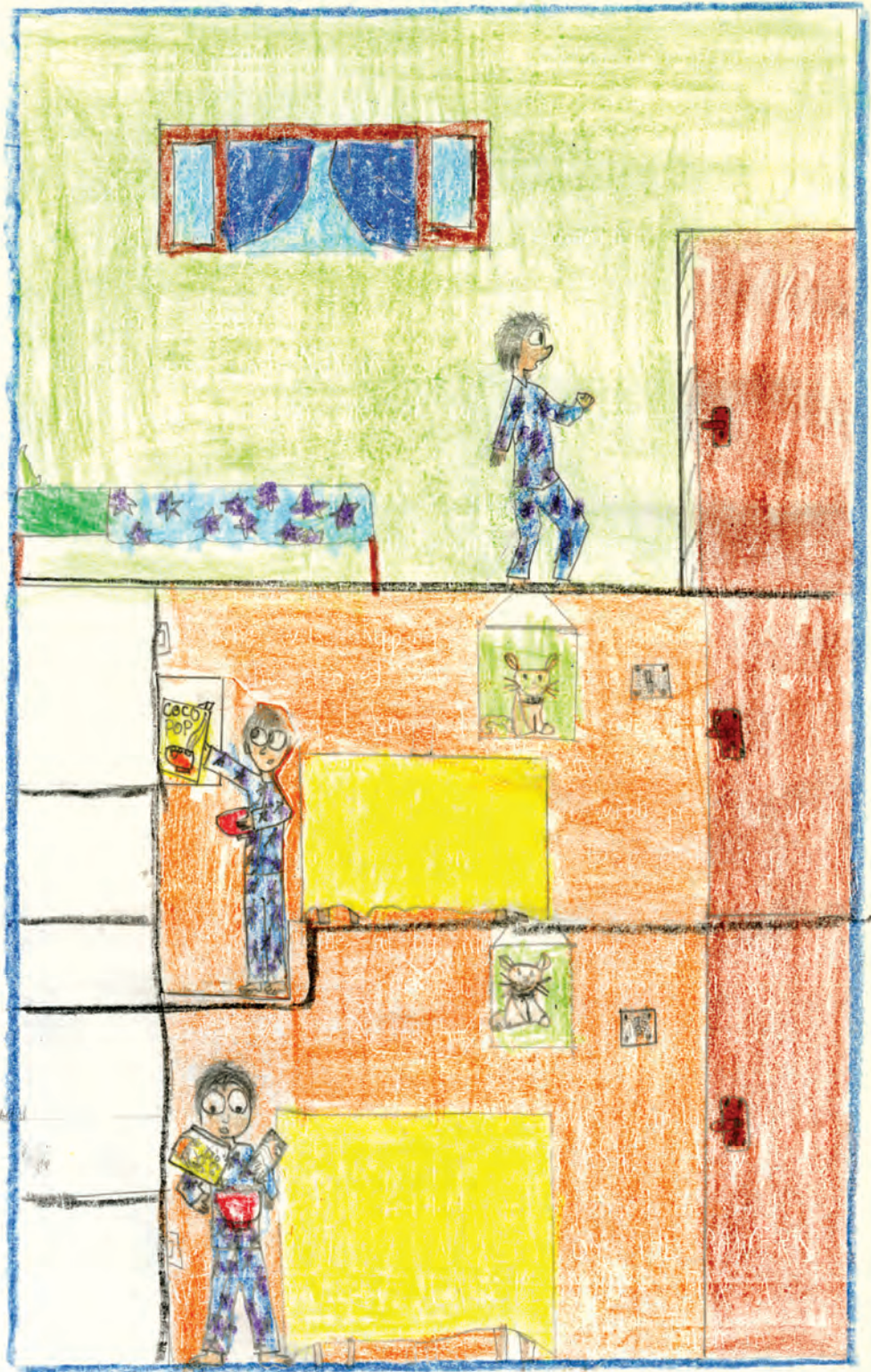
was feeling a bit stupid and shook my head once or twice. After that, I saw a piece of paper lying outside my window. I was curious, so I climbed through the window to pick it up. There was a note written on it that said:

*Don't be amazed by the powers you'll have today,
They can be yours for the day, or they might be
here to stay!*

After I read it, a swift wind came and blew the paper out of my hands. I went back into my room, wondering what the words on the paper meant. Was it written for someone? I wondered.

When I went back into my room, I looked at my bed. Suddenly my sheets, blanket and pillows rolled into place. I couldn't believe my eyes, because when I looked again everything went back to the way it was. I walked towards the door and the door closed by itself. I felt stunned, scared and confused ... all at the same time. I paused for a minute, took a few steps back and then the door opened again. I was so relieved when I heard my mother's voice, calling me for breakfast.





In the kitchen, I got myself a bowl for porridge. As I turned around, about to take the milk and the cereal, it came floating towards me and poured itself into the bowl. Out of shock, I dropped the bowl, but somehow everything froze and stood still in the air. Now I was even more shocked. I wanted to run, but couldn't move. I looked around, trying to figure out what was going on. Was I going crazy?

Then I remembered the mysterious note I found outside my window. I took a deep breath ... and to my surprise, I realised that I had just discovered my *superpower!* I was so *excited!*

When I arrived at school, I told Jason and Nahum what happened, but they didn't want to believe me. They dared me to use my superpower to do mean things to others. I agreed, because I wanted to prove to them that I was not telling a lie.

After the bell rang and everyone was standing neatly in their lines to enter the classroom, I turned my face to the sky. Then I looked steadily at the class standing next to us. A sudden wind came and ... 1, 2, 3 ... the whole class came tumbling down like dominoes! Everybody burst out laughing.

Later that day, Mr Johnson took us to the hall for Physical Education. Jason and Nahum nagged and insisted that I do another nasty trick on one of our classmates.



We sat in a circle and Mr Johnson gave each one of us an opportunity to show the class our skipping skills. There was this one girl, Tiffany, who was always good in sports. It was her turn to skip, While she was skipping, I looked at her without blinking an eye. She tripped over the skipping rope, fell facedown and knocked her tooth out! She cried and ran to the bathroom. Jason and Nahum were so impressed with what I could do. I smiled at them with pride, but deep down I felt so guilty for what I did to poor Tiffany.

After school, I walked home all by myself. I was still feeling very guilty. I went to the park, sat on the swing, closed my eyes and tried to forget all the horrible things I did.

When I opened my eyes ... There he was, standing right in front of me ... *my superhero* ... Flash! "Wow! Is it really you?" I shouted.

He nodded and repeated the words from the note, "Don't be amazed by the powers you'll have today, they can be yours for the day, or they might be here to stay!" Then, in a flash, he disappeared.

Finally it all became clear to me. I then knew, that if I want my superpowers to stay forever, I would have to choose to stand up for myself and do good. I decided there and then to use my superpower to protect children from bullies such as Jason and Nahum. Who knows ... maybe I'll become just as fast as my superhero, Flash!



THE END





SuperSparks

Nuraan Achmed

Rosendal Primary
Grade 5
Age 11

This year, Chloe gets a new phone from her Aunt but when she opens a certain app Emma sent her, it unleashes a few surprises. Meanwhile, her mother struggles to take care of Chloe and her two siblings.

Chapter 1 Getting her new phone

Chloe was so excited! She was walking restlessly all around the lounge waiting for her aunt and uncle to arrive with her *brand new* cellphone!

“Are they here yet?” she asked her older sister, Ciara, several times.

Ciara became so annoyed that she just got up from the sofa and went to her room that she shared with Chloe and Tyler, their three-year-old brother. Mrs Duncan, their mother, had to work at two different jobs, seven days a week, to make a decent living since her husband died when Chloe was only two years old. They never really got what they wanted, since their mother could not afford it.

Bang! They heard a car door slam. “They’re here, they’re here!” shouted Chloe.

Her aunt and uncle entered the house and greeted the family. Mrs Duncan immediately walked to the lounge and returned the greeting with a great welcome too.

“My phone, my phone!” squealed Chloe.

“Chloe, greet your aunt and uncle,” whispered her mum. (Their mother was very strict.)

SUPERSPARKS



AUTHOR:
NURAAN
ACHMED

ILLUSTRATOR:
NURAAN
ACHMED



"It's okay," laughed Aunt Claire.

"We know you're very excited," said Uncle George.

They all sat down. Aunt Claire gave the box to Chloe to open. There it was, her brand new cellphone. "Thank you, thank you, a trillion times, Aunt Claire and Uncle George!" shouted Chloe.

Ciara came running to the lounge, to see Chloe's new phone, "Wow! Cool phone," said Ciara.

The next morning Chloe decided to take her new phone to school and show it to her friend Emma.

"Awesome phone!" shouted Emma.

"Thanks Emma, my aunt and uncle gave it to me as a gift, explained Chloe.

Emma and Chloe had been best friends since they were four years old and they had much in common.

"Come over to my house after school and I will send you some cool apps," said Emma.

"Sure, Emma, see you, got to go to class," said Chloe in a hurry.

After school, Chloe ran home, ate lunch and went over to Emma's house. She knocked on the door and went in. "Good afternoon Mrs Davids," Chloe greeted Emma's mother.

Emma's mom is a doctor and works at a nearby clinic. "Hi, Chloe, Emma's upstairs in her room," said Mrs Davids.

Chloe went upstairs to Emma. "Hi Emma, I bought my cellphone," said Chloe.

"Hi Chloe, let me get mine," said Emma.

Chloe sat on Emma's bed and waited. "Here you go," said Chloe handing her phone to Emma.

"You send the apps to my phone and I'll go ask your mum for some snacks," said Chloe.

After Chloe returned with the delicious snacks (popcorn, soda, sweets and chips), they had a chat for hours and then Chloe checked the time.

"Wow, half past nine," she said, looking amazed, "How time flies, I must get going," said Chloe, grabbing her phone.

"Good night Emma, see you tomorrow at school! Good night Mrs Davids and thanks for the snacks," said Chloe.

"You're welcome Chloe and good night to you, too," replied Mrs Davids.

Chapter 2 Something extraordinary happens to Chloe

Ring, ring, ring! The alarm clock woke Chloe.

"Good morning my cellphone," said Chloe, speaking to her phone. Chloe got out of bed. "What should I wear today?" she asked herself.

Chloe took out denim jeans and a t-shirt and matched the colour with an old pair of sneakers she got from her cousin and some cherry lipgloss she got from Emma. She quickly brushed her hair into a ponytail, grabbed her school bag and headed downstairs for breakfast which was usually just a slice of bread and some juice.



"Morning Mom, where are Tyler and Ciara?" asked Chloe.

"Morning Pumpkin, Ciara left early with Tyler; they are at the day-care centre by now. Chloe here is your lunch money," said Mrs Duncan, taking out five rand from her purse.

"Thanks Mom," mumbled Chloe, a little disappointed. "I'm skipping breakfast today, okay and I'll be leaving now. Goodbye Mom," said Chloe.

"See you this afternoon my child," said Mrs Duncan.

As Chloe walked to school, she decided to take a detour past Emma's house. As she arrived at Emma's house, she greeted Mrs Davids. "Did Emma leave yet?" she asked Mrs Davids.

"Good morning Chloe, you just missed her. Maybe you'll find her on your way," said Mrs Davids.

"Thanks Mrs D," said Chloe. Chloe left and found Emma not far from school.

"Emma wait!" shouted Chloe.

"Hey Chloe, maybe we can check out some of those cool apps on your phone later today?" suggested Emma.

"Sure, lunch time will be fine," Chloe said.

It's lunchtime, and a really hot day. Chloe and Emma meet and sit on a bench under a tree.

"Send me some of those cool apps you have on your phone," said Chloe.

"There is one app I downloaded but I never looked at it. You can try it out anyway, Chloe," said Emma.

"I'll check it out later tonight. Can I come over today?" asked Chloe.

"Sure, but you can't stay long, we're having guests and my mom said 'no friends allowed!'" said Emma, mocking the tone of her mother's voice.

"Fine" said Chloe, laughing. The bell rang and they both headed off to class.

At half past three, Chloe went over to Emma's house. Mrs Davids had gone out shopping so she just quickly ran straight upstairs, to Emma.

"Hey," said Chloe, "So I've decided that I'm going to take a look at that app," she said taking out her cellphone.

When Chloe tapped the app, the screen appeared white and the phone discharged an electric shock and she fell.

"Chloe, are you ok?!" asked Emma with a panicked voice, shaking Chloe back to consciousness.

"I ... I'm fine," said Chloe, stuttering.

When they heard Mrs Davids' car, Chloe picked up all her things and left.

The next morning, Chloe woke up feeling a bit strange. Her phone was lying beside her on the dresser. Chloe decided not to get out of bed and reached out for her phone.

Magically the phone lifted. "Aaah, aah!" screamed Chloe, "What the? Chloe you're dreaming!" Chloe said, talking to herself. She lowered her hand and her phone fell down.

She ignored everything that had just happened even if it seemed very strange and suspicious. She got dressed and bent down to pick up her shoes under the bed, but they were too far. She tried to lift the bed, and as she did so she noticed that her phone was buzzing and that she had lifted the bed with one hand.



Push door



"Not again!" said Chloe shocked. She grabbed her bag and her phone and ran off to school, but then she lifted off the ground. She was flying! "What's happening to me?" screamed Chloe, not believing what had just happened.

When she arrived at school, she immediately ran to Emma's locker, "Emma, Emma something weird happened."

"What happened?" asked Emma.

"I moved things with my mind, I have super strength and I can fly! ... At least I think I can!" shouted Chloe.

"Are you serious? You're like a superhero, what is your superhero name?" said Emma excitedly.

"Slow down! I don't even know how it happened!" exclaimed Chloe.

"The phone ..." they both said.

"It zapped you so maybe that specific app you clicked on gave you special powers?" said Emma.

"I ... I have powers!" said Chloe, very shocked.

"But if you have powers, no one can find out about it," said Emma. "Here's the plan! Come over to my house tomorrow and I'll show you something really cool," said Emma closing her locker.

"Okay", said Chloe.

"See you tomorrow," said Emma, "And don't be late."

When Chloe got home, she didn't tell her mom or her siblings about her powers. She did her homework and went straight to bed. "Tomorrow is going to be a long day," thought Chloe.

Chapter 3 Becoming SuperSpark

It was Saturday morning, so Chloe dressed casual with a t-shirt, jeans and a pair of Ciara's old sandals and she brushed her hair.

"Morning Mom," she greeted her mother.

"Morning Pumpkin, why are you up so early?" asked Mrs Duncan.

"I'm going to Emma's, she's going to sh..." said Chloe forgetting that she was supposed to keep it a secret.

"Show you what?" asked Mrs Duncan preparing some breakfast (bread and juice) for Chloe and herself, as Ciara and Tyler were still asleep.

"Show me ... um some things she got from her grandma" lied Chloe. "So, Mom I saw this amazing new dress online, and I was hoping that you could buy it, please?" asked Chloe.

"Honey, you know we can't afford expensive things," said her mom. "When I get paid I can buy all of you a t-shirt at a cheaper price."

"Fine," said Chloe sighing.

She ate her breakfast, grabbed her phone and immediately went over to Emma.

"Emma are you home?" called Chloe.

"Yeah, come up stairs," directed Emma, "My mom went to visit my aunt!"

They both sat down and Emma locked the door. Emma was way wealthier than Chloe so she had a bigger room

and had fancy clothes. Emma pushed a button and out came a huge glass cupboard with different kinds of costumes and a whole cupboard of make-up. She then pushed another button and her cupboard lowered and two computers came out as well as a cabinet full of devices and cool stuff.

“Wow! That is by far the coolest thing that I have ever seen!” said Chloe, stunned and very curious.

“Cool right?” said Emma.

“Where did you get all this stuff?” asked Chloe.

“My mom let my super rich uncle install this for me. The costumes and make-up are for me to play dress-up in. As you know, I’m a nerd and I understand computers very well, so my mom put in these extra devices and computers because whenever there’s a break in and I’m alone at home I can use the devices and whenever I’m lost Mom can track me down with the computers. I’m now going to use all of these to transform you into a superhero,” explained Emma.

“I’m very excited,” said Chloe.

“Oh, I forgot to show you this,” said Emma.

“Emma, I also found out that I have lasers and I have electrical powers,” confessed Chloe, “Okay, what did you want to show me?” asked Chloe.

“This,” said Emma pressing another button so that her puppy poster disappeared and in its place a giant dartboard came out.

“This dartboard will help you master your laser and electrical powers,” explained Emma.

“Okay, let’s think about a superhero name for me,” said Chloe.



They both sat for a minute and thought, "How about, ... SuperSpark!" they said together.

"Then it's settled, your superhero name is SuperSpark," said Emma.

"Emma, how are the computers going to help me become a superhero?" asked Chloe.

"We can use the computers to see if there is any danger in the city," explained Emma.

"Cool, now that I have powers, I'll be famous and rich!" shouted Chloe.

"Chloe, wouldn't it be better if you use your powers for good, instead of using them for your own selfish needs?" asked Emma.

"Maybe," said Chloe. They sat in silence for a few minutes then ...

"Let's pick out a superhero costume," said Emma.

Chloe tried on different outfits and she finally found one that was green and yellow with a lightning bolt in the middle. Chloe's hair was black, so it looked really amazing. Chloe then changed into her regular clothes.

"Chloe, it's going to be an effort and take time to change into your costume, so this watch will help you," said Emma, taking out a green watch with a button in the middle, "Go ahead, push the button!"

Chloe pushed the button and a light shone brightly. She opened her eyes and she was in her costume with matching makeup.

"This is cool, but what weapons am I supposed to save the

world with?" asked Chloe curiously.

"With these," said Emma opening a cabinet full of devices and weapons.

"Okay, but it's almost lunchtime and I can't fight crime on an empty stomach," said Chloe.

"Let's go downstairs and I'll make us some delicious tuna sandwiches," said Emma.

They went downstairs, made their lunch and ate.

"I'm stuffed, thanks for the sandwiches," said Chloe.

They cleaned up and then went upstairs again. Chloe used her power of telekinesis to pick up a pillow and hit Emma.

"Can we begin with superhero training?" asked Chloe sounding very bored.

"Sure, put on your costume," commanded Emma. "We're first going to start with your laser power," said Emma, putting eight plastic bottles in different places as targets for Chloe to fire at. "Fire your lasers!" said Emma.

Chloe fired at all the targets, and Emma put out more tests for her.

"Great you passed all your tests, tomorrow you can begin your first day as SuperSpark," said Emma, just as she heard a beep from her computers.

"What's that?" asked Chloe sounding very curious.

"Mmm, seems like there's a robbery taking place at the bank downtown!" exclaimed Emma.

"Then SuperSpark has to save the day!" said Chloe pressing the button on her watch.

Emma gave Chloe an earpiece and they both put one on.

"You can talk to me on this earpiece, if you're in any trouble!" exclaimed Emma.

Chloe went outside and took off. She got to the bank just in time. She used her electrical power to shock the criminals and cuffed their hands. Just then, the police arrived and arrested them. The news crew also arrived and asked Chloe some questions.

"What is your name?" asked one of the journalists.

"My name is ... SuperSpark!" said Chloe very proudly.

The police gave her an award, because they had been trying to catch these criminals for a long time.

The news crew asked her all kinds of stupid questions like, "Do you come from another planet?" or "Were you born with your powers?"

After that they took a couple of photos of her.

SuperSpark, shocked criminals! read Emma. "You're in the news!" shouted Emma.

"It's pretty great being in the news and getting an award," said Chloe boasting.

They were at Chloe's house because Mrs Duncan had to go to work and Tyler went to her aunt so Ciara and Chloe were home alone. Chloe and Emma overheard Ciara telling her friend over the phone that SuperSpark was a fake.

"How dare she say that about me?" asked Chloe.

"Technically she doesn't know it's you!" exclaimed Emma.

"Oh, right," said Chloe. "Let's rather go over to your house, before I really start shooting my lasers," said Chloe joking around.

"Sure," said Emma as they headed to the front door.

When they arrived at Emma's house, there was a note saying that her mother had left for work. She read the note, went inside, locked all the doors and went upstairs. Chloe switched on the television and the news was on, the newswoman was talking and she said, "SuperSpark, the mysterious superhero saved the day and caught the criminals at the bank downtown."

"Wow, I'm famous!" shouted Chloe.

Just then they heard a beep on the computer.

"There's a break-in at the grocery store!" exclaimed Emma.

Chloe immediately flew to the grocery store, "Stop right there!" said Chloe to the thief.

"Oh no! It's SuperSpark!" shouted the thief.

SuperSpark immediately took action and shocked them and used her super strength to pick them up and throw them straight to the police station. She let all the customers out, as well as the store owner.

"Is everyone okay?" asked SuperSpark.

"Were all fine," said the customers.

The press arrived and took pictures of her and they even invited SuperSpark to a celebrity party.

"You're invited to a celebrity party?" said Emma, very excited.

"I'm very excited!" exclaimed Chloe.

"Could we go to the library after school tomorrow?" asked Emma.

"I'm Sorry Emma, I'm a superhero now I don't have time to go to a library!" exclaimed Chloe.

"Chloe, that was really mean," said Emma, sitting on her bed.

"What was mean?" asked Chloe playing dumb.

"What you just said to me, and don't play dumb," said Emma getting mad.

"Look, I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings but I just said what's on my mind. I gotta go, text me if there's any danger in the city," said Chloe as she walked out the door, but Emma stopped her.

"Wait! Ever since you've become SuperSpark, you have been acting differently!" exclaimed Emma.

"So what if I've been acting differently? I'm a superhero now," said Chloe, being very mean.

"Yeah, but who helped you? Who trained you? Who gave you the costume and the cool weapons and devices? And most importantly, who's your best friend?" asked Emma.

"Maybe you're not ... my friend anymore!" shouted Chloe, "I don't need your help!" said Chloe, walking out of the room.

The next day when Emma was watching television she saw something that got her attention, it was SuperSpark. The newswoman said that there had been another robbery the day before and that when SuperSpark got there the thieves had already gone and that SuperSpark had really messed up.

"Chloe needs me!" thought Emma. She immediately got her phone and texted Chloe. Emma waited and waited for her reply but Chloe just ignored her. "Must be the signal?" thought Emma.

Meanwhile Chloe was in her room at home alone, with Ciara at her friend's house and Tyler and her mom out shopping. She was angry at herself and when she finally got the text message she read it, ignored it and took a nap. The next day at school, everybody was talking about SuperSpark. Chloe usually went to Emma's locker and chatted, but this morning she ignored her and walked on, and they didn't speak to each other that day.



After school, there was danger in the city and Emma followed Chloe, hid in the bushes and watched as Chloe transformed into SuperSpark, lost control and saw how the criminals managed to get away. The news crew arrived and asked SuperSpark questions. When the reporter asked her what had happened, SuperSpark said that she had lost someone very important in her life, someone that she needed. Then she took off and went home. Emma heard everything and also went home. When she got there Chloe was waiting for her in her room.



"What are you doing here?" asked Emma.

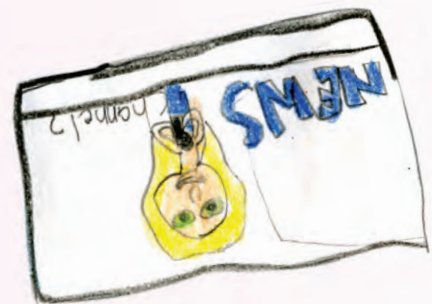
"Your Mom let me in, and I'm here to apologise!" exclaimed Chloe.

"I also want to apologise, I followed you and I heard everything you said to the reporter," confessed Emma.

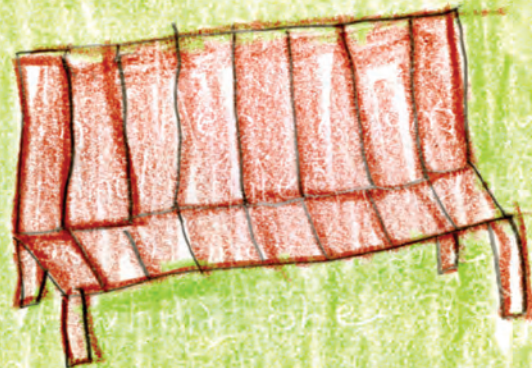
"I'm sorry – for being a jerk and nasty to you, I hope you can forgive me?" exclaimed Chloe.

"Of course I can forgive you! Friends?" asked Emma.

"Friends!" said Chloe as they hugged each other.



THE NEW



They then went to the park but it was under construction, and they wanted to leave but Emma first wanted ice-cream. Emma went to go get the ice-cream, and Chloe went to go sit on a bench. As she sat there, she then saw that the construction worker who was putting up a giant board started to lose control. She hid behind a tree and transformed into SuperSpark, took flight and used her super strength to catch the giant board, and saved the elderly man standing underneath it.

“SuperSpark! SuperSpark!” chanted everyone in the park, including Emma. The news crew was there to film everything and the next day the headline on the news said “SuperSpark rises again!”

Later that night, Emma and Chloe sat on the swing in Emma’s back yard looking at the stars. “Well done SuperSpark, I’m impressed,” said Emma.

“Thanks Emma,” said Chloe.

“So are you going to continue your adventures as SuperSpark? Or are you going to close this chapter of your life?” asked Emma, very curious.

“Let’s just say, this is a chapter of my life I’ll never forget,” said Chloe, closing her eyes.

SuperSpark won reward money and awards and used the money to help her family. She had to lie to her mother and say that she won a few competitions, and as for Emma, she gets to keep her best friend.

The end.



Do you remember who you really are?

Nishaat Gallie

Belmor Primary
Grade 6
Age 11

I want to thank our creator for everything and more. I want to thank the Growsmart team for giving us such an opportunity. I want to thank my school Belmor Primary, our principal Ms C. Poole and the Department of Education. I would also like to say thank you to my teacher and also to Ms Hector as well as to my mother for being there to guide me and for giving me a few ideas to draw the pictures that help tell my story.

My hope is that you find my story interesting.

Thank you.

Chapter 1 The great escape

In the early hours of the morning, I climbed out of my pencil bag and slowly packed my suitcase. I left everything, not thinking of where I would go, but I kept going ... the thought of being needed all the time was overwhelming. Then after a mile of walking down the road I noticed a bus and I headed towards it. As I came closer, the bus stopped. I got on board and the bus drove off. With a sigh of relief, I fell asleep.

Chapter 2 The journey

As I opened my eyes, I was in a beautiful garden with a fountain and a voice was calling my name.

"Pencil, Pencil, come closer!"

I called out: "Who are you?"

The voice replied, "I am the voice of the true being within you. I am your one true guide and you are fully responsible for how you choose to use me."

"Look! Look! What do you see?" said the voice.



2 The Journey

As I opened my eyes I was in a beautiful garden with a fountain and a voice was calling my name? "Pencil Pencil come here" I called out: "who are you?" And the voice replied: "I am the voice of the true being within you. I am your one true guide and you are fully responsible for how you choose to use me."

"Look! Look! what do you see said the voice. The water was black..."
 "Why do you feel so sad?" asked the voice
 "I am tired of everybody neglecting me all the time so I ran away" I

The fountain was shining and the water was clean and a big drop of water said to me

"When we show gratitude we bring joy to others lives and when others know joy only then can we know happiness. There now no peace it is because we have forgotten who we are."
 "Open your eyes pencil look deeper."
 "I saw myself in the water and how important I am and I like what I saw"

"What is your purpose?" asked the flowers and I smiled and said.
 "To help others less capable to become greater than they think they are because through my voices are heard, feelings are expressed and stories are told."

At that very moment I decided to change my name from pencil to Mr. Growsmart Pencil
 I have grown so much smarter



The water was black ...

"Why do you feel so sad?" asked the voice.

"I am tired of everybody needing me all the time, so I ran away," I said.

"Do you know what the purpose of your life is? What is it that you want?" asked the voice.

"I want joy, happiness and peace! But most of all I want freedom. But how?" I exclaimed.

"Change the way you look at life and you will grow smart. First, you must return to the fountain if you want to know the purpose of your life." The voice replied wisely.

The fountain was shining and the water was clear and a big drop of water said to me: "When we show gratitude, we bring joy to others' lives and when others know joy, only then can we know happiness! If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten who we are. Open your eyes Pencil and look deeper!"

I saw myself in the water and how important I am ... and I *liked* what I saw!

"What is your purpose?" asked the flowers.

And I smiled and said: "To help others less capable become greater than they think they are because through me, voices are heard, feelings are expressed and stories are told."

It was at that very moment that I decided to change my name from Pencil to Mr Growsmart Pencil. I have grown much smarter ...

Chapter 3 A new beginning

The master of the fountain granted me two wishes. My first wish was to return home. My second wish was to show gratitude every morning when I looked into the mirror and into my eyes. I started with this ...

Dear Master

*Today is a new day and new beginning. Help me to start my life over, starting today with the power of self-love. Help me to accept myself without judgement because when I reject myself I reject you. Let the love that I feel for myself be so **strong** that I never do anything that goes against my beliefs. Let me see with eyes of love so that I see you in every **flower**, in every **person** and in every **thing** ... because you are **everywhere**. And let me always be aware of this **truth**. Today master, let everything I say be an expression of the love in my heart. Today master, make it easy for me and all humankind to be like you, to love like you, love to share like you! Make us grow smart so we can create a masterpiece of our own lives just as you created everything **beautiful**. Today, I give thanks that you have made me a channel of communication. Today, I give you all my love and my gratitude because you have given me life as a pencil and made me grow smart!*

All my love and gratitude

The Growsmart pencil





The world's most amazing sketch artist

Shaheeda Bey

Summit Primary
Grade 6
Age 11

My life ... cut and carved from an oak tree, I found myself packaged ready for sale. I was purchased for the price of R2,00 and that's when my life began.

Ten times today, I heard the zipper crack and *zzzip* open and ten times I heard it close. Each time I was taken out. My purpose was to be used to sketch the most magnificent flowers. The person that I belonged to was a beautiful teenage girl, Thia. Thia aspired to be the world's most amazing sketch artist. My point stroked gently against the surface of a blank page, my body was bedazzled with sparkly blue sequins and sparkles of pink glitter. The rose! The Daffodil! The Lily! All my favourites. All of these were drawn with me as the tool in Thia's journey to become an artist.

The flowers came to life! Their beautiful scent overpowered the unpleasant smell of lead, leaving me with a wondrous sensation. Until the scent slowly started to fade as I was placed back into the pencil bag. Sunset is not here yet, that was when I realized my owner's full potential.





New flowers are always drawn around Spring. The Japanese flower, *sakura* (cherry blossom). A dandelion. These flowers are sketched individually on separate pages, so that each flower's beauty can shine on its own without having any of the others stealing its limelight.

When Thia is confused about what to sketch, she nibbles the bottom end of my wooden body as she concentrates and seeks the inspiration that she requires. Of course, this doesn't always work, so she would then repeatedly knock my head on the page as if she thought the flowers would start popping out of my head. I know that if that were to ever happen, that I would think of all kinds of beautiful flowers so that Thia could knock them out whenever we wanted to see more.

Thia gently laid me down on the night stand as she slipped into her sleeping gown that was patterned with the most breathtaking flowers ever seen. Roses of every colour imaginable, with all other kinds of flowers. Flowers that complemented the roses, portraying their divine beauty. She brushes her hair softly, singing, "One rose, two roses, three roses, four roses . . ." until she reached the number 100. I was on my way to dreamland by then but just before I fell asleep, I would watch her prance around the room joyfully touching the flowers painted on the walls – yellow, blue, green, pink – all her favourite colours – which are mine too by the way.

My life is amazing and I wouldn't give it up for anything else in the world, except for Thia's life.

I'd have my own room, sketch pads, a pencil with my name on it and an imagination that would flow freely through my hands to create the most magnificent art pieces – sketches of flowers everywhere. My name, known worldwide, as famous as I could ever be, and a full life filled my thoughts.

My imagination has evidently gotten the better of me, but yes, indeed it would have been wonderful if I were human, but hey, I must really be dreaming now. Goodnight.





The perfect gift

Xena Fisher

Delft Primary
Grade 6
Age 12

From a very young age, I learned how precious life is. I could not have done this without the help of my parents and the Almighty Father. So, when things seem to be at their worst, please read my story and believe that even when there seems to be no hope, God cares and He is always there to carry us through.

I was born on 16 June 2004, yes Youth Day, and therefore I would like to encourage the youth of today to read my story and really believe that whatever life throws at you, it is never the end. I learned to love life at a very young age, because the trials we went through as a family only made us stronger.

When I was born, my mom and dad had been married for 11 years, but had had their fair share of trials and tribulations.

In 1994, my mom was diagnosed with liver cancer, only one year after their marriage. They started her on aggressive chemotherapy. It was a long and hard road for my parents and to top it all, doctors told my parents that my mother would never be able to bear children, because of her disease.

In 1998, bad luck struck again. Mom was involved in a motor vehicle accident, not knowing she was pregnant with my older brother. Now this was really a miracle, especially since she was told that she would never be able to conceive. But that was not all. X-rays showed that she was paralysed from the waist down due to her injuries from the accident. I was amazed, listening to my mom telling this, and there was a big lump in my throat. Even though

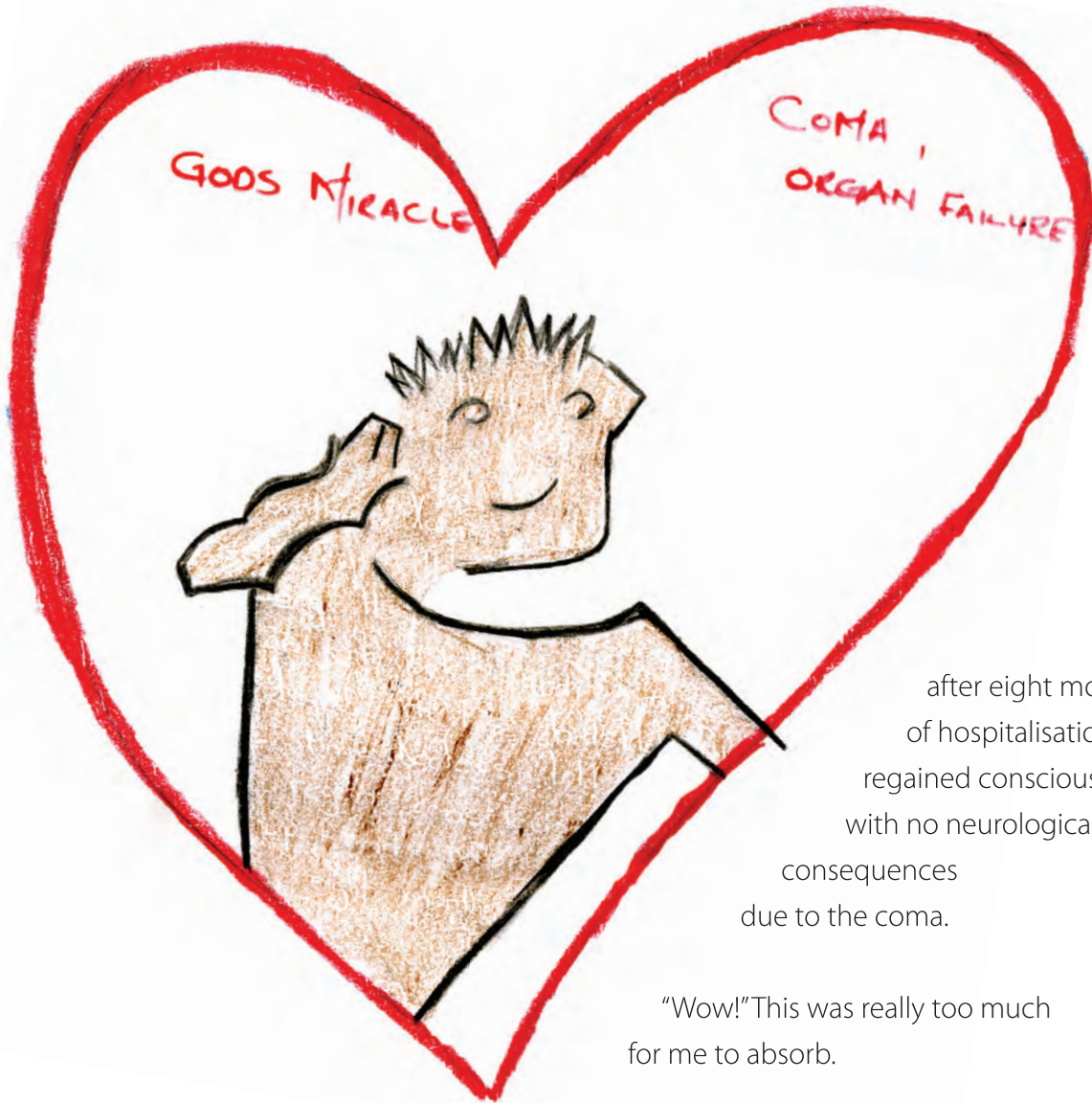
I was only seven years old, I realised how lucky I was to have such a courageous mom who fought against all odds to survive.

Despite being confined to a wheelchair, my mom gave birth to a healthy baby boy. After my brother's birth, doctors told my mom that she would never be able to walk again. My dad had to take care of her and the baby. It was just more bad news after bad news. While I was listening to my mom, I could not understand how she could stay so positive after everything they went through. But they survived this ordeal, because they love life and they live for Christ.

"Amazing!" I thought.

When my brother Xavier was three months old, he became very ill and ended up in the Neonatal Unit of Tygerberg Hospital. He was on the brink of death, in an incubator and in a coma for six months. Mom stayed at his bedside in her wheelchair throughout that time. Doctors told my parents that he would never regain consciousness, but my parents never gave up and never stopped believing. Remarkably,





after eight months of hospitalisation he regained consciousness with no neurological consequences due to the coma.

"Wow!" This was really too much for me to absorb.

Then, in 2003, just when my parents thought that everything was going well for them, they were faced with yet another major setback. Mom went for a check-up, just to discover that she was pregnant with me. Being a high-risk patient, she was sent to hospital for more tests. The news was not good. The cancer was back and had spread to her kidneys. She would have to undergo chemotherapy once again, but this time, being pregnant,

the foetus was at risk. Mom refused to terminate the pregnancy, although she was advised by her doctor to do so.

“Wow!” This was really too much for me to absorb at my age. With tears in my eyes, I just gave mom a big hug.

Well, I lived to tell this story and Mom is still alive and has been cancer free since her last treatment. The biggest miracle of all is that Mom can walk again after being in a wheelchair for five years. Only her faith in God kept her strong.

Our family has survived against all odds and believe me, my story is not even half-way through. I will have to write another book to tell the rest.

Yes, I love life, because God is in control and my family and God loves me!





Will she ever change?

Sisipho Tronk

Liwa Primary
Grade 6
Age 12

*To my family and friends:
you mean a lot to me.
Thank you Mr Andrew,
you made a difference.
Likhona Mvunge, you are
a star. Thank you to the
Growsmart team for the
platform.*

"Don't Drink And Drive"

A girl whose parents perished in a car accident caused by a drunk driver writes her own story about a life full of abuse. Her hope is that her aunt might change one day.

I always liked this journey. I enjoyed it more than any other journey. I always looked forward to seeing my family. I knew that along the way I would be spoiled with whatever I wanted. Most of all, I liked sleeping whilst the car was driving and then waking up again with the car still driving. I never dreamt that on this particular day, things would change.

We had made all the preparations for the journey. I was wearing new clothes and had a lot more in my bag. Dad had bought a lot of presents for our extended family back home as usual. Mom was nicely dressed and everything else was perfect for this long journey. My father had taken his car for a service a week before and we were a hundred per cent sure that we would get to the Eastern Cape without any glitches.

At exactly seven o'clock we started the journey. There wasn't a lot of traffic on the way. I was sitting at the back playing games on my treasured Samsung tablet. I really loved this possession. It was a present from my lovely father for doing well at school. I would at times chip in with jokes as Father drove. We were a happy family going back home. After driving for some distance, I peacefully fell asleep and dreamt about playing with my friends in the village. I expected to wake up with the car still driving.

When I woke up with a start, my head was full of bandages and I looked around confused, not knowing where I was. I expected to be in a car but I was lying on a bed with blue linen. On my side was a young, beautiful lady in white clothes. I soon realised I was in hospital.

"Mom! Dad!" I called out.

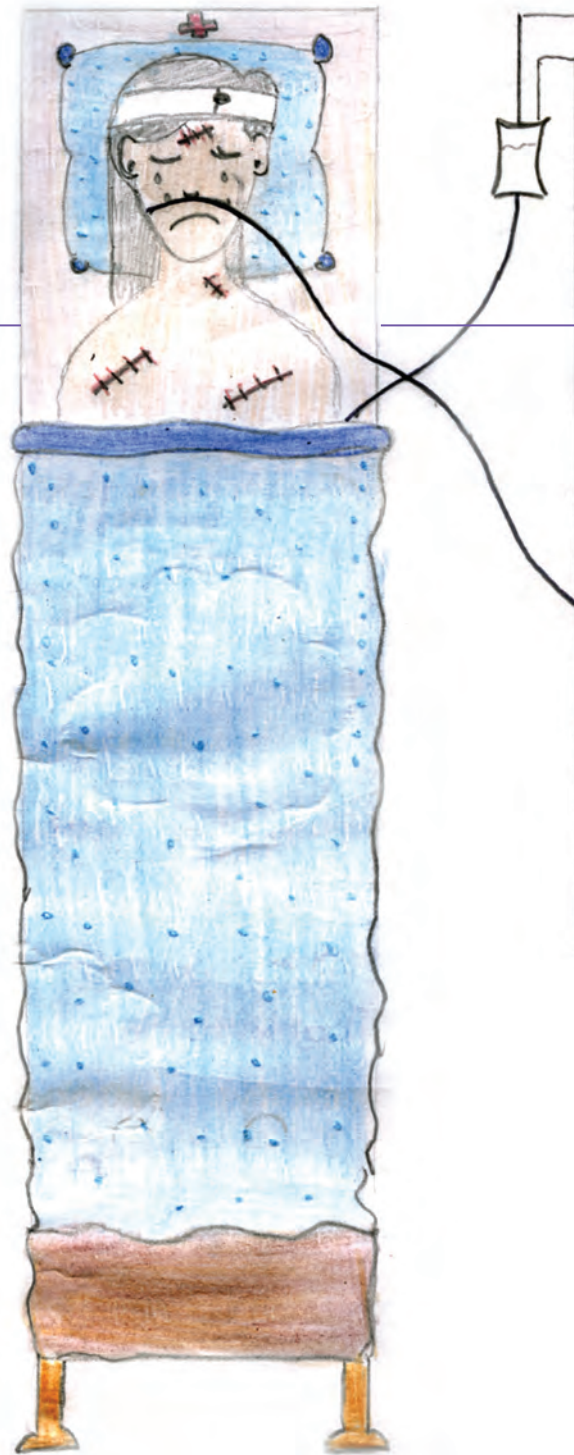
The nurse rose up and came to me and calmed me.

"Where am I? Where are my parents? Why am I bandaged? What happened?" I fired these questions in quick succession to the nurse without giving her any chance to respond.

"Mom! Dad!" I called out again.

The nurse calmed me down again and told me not to worry for I was in safe hands. How could I calm down when I did not know where my parents were?

Still confused, a doctor came to check on me. With him were my uncle Zola and his wife. The doctor checked on me and told my uncle and me that I was fine and that I would be out of the hospital in a day's time. My uncle asked for some time alone with me and the doctor and the nurse disappeared. I



sensed something bad had happened. It felt like ages before my uncle finally opened his mouth to break the news to me. It was not easy for him to break the news of my parents' death.

"Lindo ... darling ... I'm here, I'm here for you," Uncle said.

I lifted my bandaged head and blinked, staring at him.

"I do not know how to say this to you. Your mom and dad have gone to their father, The Creator."

This shocked me but I didn't say anything. I just stared at him with my eyes blinded by tears. He was sitting next to me. His face was bleak and strained. A muscle pulsed in his temple and his startlingly blue eyes were dulled by sadness.

"You were involved in an accident and your parents died on the spot," he continued.

He explained to me that the accident was caused by a drunk driver. I couldn't take it anymore and I started to cry. How can a responsible citizen get drunk and have the guts to go behind the wheel? It's written everywhere that drinking and driving is prohibited. It is even written on beer bottles and on the billboards on the road. Why do people behave like animals? What's so special in that beer? These thoughts troubled my mind as I cried.

Wiping away the tears on my cheeks with his handkerchief, Uncle took me in his arms, held me and soothed me.

"It's such a terrible tragedy," he murmured. "I cared for them too, Lindo, so I know what you are suffering. I'm suffering myself." As he spoke, his grip tightened.

I held him. "It's not fair," I sobbed. "Where is that driver? I want to squash him now!" I was full of anger and hatred for him.

"I do not know," he said.

As I started talking, grief overcame me once more and fresh tears flowed. Uncle continued to comfort me. He was so kind. I buried my face against his chest and held on to him as if he was the only thing I had left in the world. Indeed he was my safe haven. He continued to murmur gentle words to me. We sat together for a long time and eventually some kind of peacefulness drifted over me and my tears finally stopped. It was just so painful to me. A drunk driver causing an accident. *Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!* This word kept on creeping into my mind.

On my release from the hospital, I was placed into the hands of my uncle and his wife.

My parent's funeral was a distressing ordeal for me in a number of ways, and I was sorrowful as I sat in the front row of the church. My uncle and his wife were seated on either side of me. I felt as if they were wedging me in, even though they were the only people left for me. As I sat, I detected a lack of grief in my aunt and this made me angry inside.

I sat with my hands folded in my lap, wishing this day had never come into being. I rued the day that a stupid driver

caused the accident. I hated everything about him. Yes we all have to die at some time, but the way my loving parents died was painful, simply because of a stupid driver. As I thought about them, tears started to flow.

I took a glance at my aunty, she seemed to be in great pain, but there was something about her hands that betrayed her. She was so thin, with a wasted body. I distrusted her from the day I saw her in the hospital.

I listened attentively to all the speakers from those who gave eulogies. I had a feeling of sadness and a big sense of loss as we left the church for the cemetery. A part of my life had



come to an end. Nothing would ever be the same. I couldn't help my tears once more as they lowered my parents' caskets into the grave. *To hell with that stupid driver!*

It was difficult to forget my parents. My uncle has three children, two older than me and one younger. After my parents' funeral, my uncle and his family moved to our house because it was bigger. Life was normal as long as my uncle was around, but when he was away, Aunty turned into another human being. She abused me and hit me. She told me words that I never expected to hear.

She regularly beat me and berated me, slapping me as often as she dared and promised to kill me. She kept me locked up and treated me like a piece of furniture. I was not worth living, she told me always. I started to become familiar with her cruelty and her unkindness, the mercilessness of her tongue and the viciousness of the back of her hand. She was full of venom and complaints.

I had come back home from school late. I was hardly done changing my clothes, when she came in. Dishes were still in the sink unwashed. It was my siblings who had used the plates and left them unwashed. They were not supposed to wash dishes at all. That was my duty, according to her. I was a slave in my own father's house.

"Why are the dishes unwashed?" she asked.

I did not answer, not wanting to cause problems. She came to our bedroom door and looked at me evilly. I saw her eyes glitter with anger. It was a look I knew so well, a look that

terrorised me. At times, I simply forced myself to ignore it and rise above it. It was the only way I had to survive, but today it was different. She spat her venomous words at me and ferociously looked at me.

She lowered her eyes and she advanced on me with a cruel look in her eyes. I knew I was in for it, but dared not show her that I was frightened. It was one of those days. She stood right in front of me and grabbed me by the chin.

“Shall I show you what I can do, dear?”

I didn't answer again, knowing that anything I said would only worsen the already volatile situation. There was nothing to do but wait for the torturing – praying it would end quickly. Suddenly, she pulled back her arm and hit me in the face with the full force of it. I would have reeled backwards but she was holding me in a firm grasp. She hit my cheekbone and I thought I felt a splinter and saw some stars. I looked at her, blood oozing from my mouth and she hit me again. I knew defending myself would cause more hurt. I had learned that lesson the hard way previously. She kicked me and left me lying on the mat.

I slept right there on the mat, since that was my bed. The bed I used to use was now used by her kids. I was crying, wondering why that stupid, drunk driver caused the accident and had left me in this situation.

My older siblings were laughing at me. It was only Thando, the youngest, who always cared about me and was always distressed to see me in such a situation. I salute you brave

Thando. I know he was appalled by the way his mother treated me but he could do nothing. Once he tried to stop her abusing me, but then he also became a victim. Since then, he always just watched in sympathy with teary eyes. It was Thando who came to console me. My whole body was sore. I motioned him to give me my school bag. I struggled to take out a book and pen in my agony.

I do not know how many hours I wrote about my painful life, which changed on the day that stupid drunk driver caused the accident. I sharpened my pencil several times to put everything on paper. Everyone else was asleep. I just wished my aunty would change and realise that she was living in my parents' house which they sweated to build. I found solace in my pencil, writing my story.

I am not sure how and when I slept. When I woke up, my uncle was looking angrily at my aunty with my diary in his hands. The pencil I used to write with was by my side. I looked at it and realised that I had written a lot of stuff before I slept. I had never written that much about my life before, but I somehow I felt relieved. It seemed Uncle had read everything in my diary to my aunty. He knelt beside me and hugged me.

I am not sure what will happen. Maybe Aunty will change or maybe she is just waiting for Uncle to go away and pay me back more than ever.





An act of love

Tasreeq America

Dagbreek Primary
Grade 6
Age 12

Chickens and hens show empathy just like humans. This heart-wrenching story tells us about a boy who discovers what love and affection really mean through the determination of a little chicken, who through harsh dangers, found its way back to its mother.

Chapter 1 The drought

My story begins on a farm in the little Karoo. It was the year of the Great Drought. The community of this little town is located below the Outeniqua Mountains. They still use ancient farming methods that were passed down from their forefathers. Many farmers, like my uncle Joe, were sustainable cash crop farmers. My uncle Joe raised chickens to make a living. He bought his chickens from Farmer Brown, from across Route 66. Farmer Brown had many hens that bred chickens, and he would then sell the chickens to the poultry farmers in the district.

There was never a shortage of water for crops, but people had to use water sparingly. Very fortunately for them, there were mountain springs and little cataracts which they used as a source of water for drinking and bathing. Households' grey water was collected and used for small orchards and vegetable patches.

The farming community was very small, but there was extremely neighbourly love in the area. Each farmer had his own unique style and farming methods and produced different crops. At the end of each harvest, the farming

Why
did
the



Chick
cross
the
road

Act of love



Author:

Taree
Americ



Illustrator
Llunellun

community would get together to exchange their surplus crops with one another, thus hunger was never a problem.

Chapter 2 My vacation

It was a cold, brisk morning, during the June vacation that I excitedly hopped on the bus to visit my uncle Joe. It was harvest time. I liked harvest time, because while we were packing the crates, we could eat a carrot here or a turnip there or munch on a tomato or two. Most of all, I liked to collect the warm eggs from the chicken coop and I liked to feed the chickens. My uncle was very proud of his chickens and his eggs, as they were the best quality in the district.

The road was dusty as the bus approached the mountainous Karoo town. I could smell the mountain fynbos and hear the running brooks despite the drought. My uncle embraced me as I disembarked. He took my case and ruffled my curly hair. We walked in silence, and I sensed that something was troubling him.

I washed, ate and helped my Mamma with the chores. While we were working around the kitchen, I asked, "Mamma, what is wrong with Uncle Jo? He looks troubled?"

Mamma just shook her tiny curls and replied, "Your uncle is very stressed because he thinks someone is stealing his chickens. Every morning when he checks the coop, the chickens seem to be getting fewer and fewer. He thinks it might be a fox or a wild dog, but there is no blood and there are no loose feathers lying around. This puzzles him."

I could see that Mamma was also very distressed and worried, because Mamma said that Uncle Joe needed his strength to raise the chickens. I decided then and there that I was going to be a spy for my uncle. Who could be stealing the chickens? I decided to lay a trap for the wild fox or thief.

Chapter 3 The trap and rescue

I got up in the middle of the night to start my night watch. It was very cold. The Karoo nights are extremely cold, and damp. I wore a beanie and one of the farm worker's warm coats. I lay still in the wet grass, waiting!

Just before sunrise, I suddenly heard a ruffling of feathers and at the same time heard the cock crowing from Farmer Brown's farm. There in the morning mist were five little chickens hurry-scurrying towards the busy R66. I was panicking, because at that time of the morning, many long-distance trucks go speeding by, and I was worried that they might get killed. But what on Earth were they doing running towards and wanting to cross that busy road?

I hurried back to get a box to save them. Just in time, I managed to save four chickens, but the fifth one got away. I closed the box and chased after the fifth chicken. He was darting towards the dangerous road, frantically trying to escape my aching arms. The chicken managed to duck between the wheels of an 18-wheeler. What now? I waited for a safe place to cross. I was worried that I might have lost her. I crossed the road and to my surprise she was perched on a sharp rock.





When she spotted me she fled towards Farmer Brown's farm. I followed her to the gate of the poultry farm. By this time, we were both exhausted. I had given up on the chase. My main interest was to see why the chicken was so determined to cross the road. She went straight to the hens' coop. Then the strangest thing happened. The chick went straight to the big brown hen. What astounded me even more was that the hen spread her wings and the little chicken hopped enthusiastically towards the mother hen.

I went back to fetch the box with the rest of the chicks. I released them. The little chicks cuddled under the mother hen's wings. I was happy, but at the same time sad. I shed a tear or two, and realised that we humans do not realise that animals also feel empathy towards each other. Just as human mothers and their children show distress when apart, so too did this mother hen and her little chickens show us how strong the bond of love is. From that day on, I had the deepest respect for God's creatures.

I read in a book that hens are extremely affectionate and caring mothers. In Christian writings, Jesus is said to have used the love of a mother hen to express God's love for humans. An ancient Roman saying, "You were raised by a hen" was a compliment.

My uncle Joe and Farmer Brown had to reach an agreement as to how they were going to deal with this phenomenon. Maybe someone out there reading my story can come up with a solution?

The end.



Into the forest

Aafia Abrahams

Talfalah Primary
School
Grade 6
Age 11

Want to find out how besties Jasmine and Kate get themselves out of a sticky mess? First they find themselves in a haunted forest, then in a house of a witch and then in a cave with a handsome, dangerous stranger. Oh dear! What have they gotten themselves into? If you admire teenagers that are fearless, daring and bold, then this story will keep you reading till the very last page. Follow them if you dare!

Chapter 1 - My ring's gone

"What! It's gone! It's gone!" I screamed so loudly that the whole neighbourhood heard me, including my best friend Jasmine.

Luckily for me, my mother wasn't at home, so she didn't rush in (as she normally would have done). Just then, Jasmine called and asked me what was wrong, so I said, "I woke up this morning and looked for my diamond ring. I looked under my bed, blankets, in the cupboards and even in my new Nike takkies ... nothing."

Jasmine – who is as pretty and bright as the flower – is my best friend and we share everything except boyfriends and lipstick. (That is, when the um ... above *become* the topic of our frequent cyber chats, we'll certainly not want to share them, Mom!) In my most convincing voice, I told Jasmine that we now had the most pressurised task of finding my really expensive diamond ring before my mom discovered it was missing. It was a present from her and my dad.

"How can it be lost, if you still had it on your bedside table last night? Did any of Kenn's friends suspiciously have to



use the toilet too many times last night? Did you ask him? Are any of his friends on drugs? Do you ... ?”

“Whoa, slow down, Jasmine Bestie. No one uses the toilet on this side of the house and Kenn’s friend left early. Something funny’s going on and our adventure awaits. Wanna come?”

“Need ya ask, Bestie? On my way, let me just get dressed.”

As Jasmine ran her fingers through her long, light brown hair she looked at her cupboard and thought, “What should I wear? Jeans no, maybe tights; why are these long skirts in here?”

I sneaked out of the house without my mother noticing and met Jasmine at the entrance to the wooded area behind our house. (We were told that someone had been seen heading in the direction of the forest last night.) I arrived with two golf clubs, mace spray, some leftover Quality Street chocolates and mineral water. As we walked, there was a strange silence in the forest. No birds singing. No animals running around. As if the forest was waiting, the trees watching patiently. Like a predator for its prey. I had a sudden longing to just turn around and run. But this was my challenge.

Jasmine and I set off boldly to where my annoying brother and his friends had never been – the forest. There were legends aplenty about huge eight-legged strange nightly creatures and peculiar sounds from the forest, but these were regarded as rubbish. Magic? Stuff and fluff. Terrifying nightly creatures? *Please*. The occasional robber was the most terrifying tale that I had heard of.

Chapter 2 - In the forest

We walked and walked.

"Sweets? Water?"

"Ouch, what hurt me? Damn, I knew I shouldn't have put on my old takkies!"

These questions and outbursts became less frequent and more muted as we tremulously progressed deeper into the forest. The silence made us nervous and it was somehow . . . well . . . creepy, because the dark trees around us were rough with bark that looked like nails, old worn-out nails . . .

"Wait!" I screeched, as I grabbed Jasmine's arm, "Is that a house? Why is it such an ugly green, yellowish colour?"

"I don't know!" Jasmine screeched back, "Can we at least sit down and eat another choc?"

I was secretly terrified, but couldn't show it, because Jasmine was there. What would she think of me, seeing as I was the one who told her to come with?

"No more!"

"Water?"

"Up!"

I realised we had two choices – face whatever was in that ugly green, yellowish hut or die of hunger, here in the cold.

“Talk about being between a rock and a hard place,” I sighed.

No one opened when we knocked, so we gingerly entered. Bad manners, my Aunt Julian would say.



Chapter 3 – Grezelda

Jasmine whispered with panic in her voice, “Do we celebrate Halloween in this country? Look at this witch’s hat? Is that a . . . a *broom*?”

“And a wand?” I wondered, inaudibly. The thought of a witch living here made us jerk our heads in terror. Our imagination was running away with us . . . I felt something crawling up my leg and up my arm.

“Spiders! Run Kate!” Jasmine yelled.

We ran blindly through the house, clearing cobwebs as we went. Before we reached the door we saw a humanlike figure floating towards us. A ghost? Jasmine froze and I almost evaporated with fear. Terrifying screams echoed through the house and I realised it was us. Gathering courage, but still frightened, I asked the figure’s name.

She replied in a thin voice, “Grezelda” and stepped out into the open.

She was old, green, with a sharp nose, wrinkled and in her forties.

She was unexpectedly kind and invited us to tea, but I said, "No thank you, we are in a hurry!" then we left as fast as our quivering legs could carry us.

Chapter 4 – The handsome stranger

Outside it was getting darker.

"Perhaps we should turn back," Jasmine suggested.

"Which way? Did you bring a compass? All the trees look the same to me," I said sourly, wishing I had never insisted on a diamond ring for my birthday in the first place.

By now, Jasmine and I were wondering how two intelligent, level-headed teenage girls could've thought a morning adventure in the forest was a good idea. We were tired, irritable and worried that we might never see our loving parents and annoying siblings again – and for what? A diamond ring. We started to run ... and ran into the most handsome male these two besties had ever seen. Tall, eyes the colour of young grass, brown chopped hair, a charming smile that revealed straight ... well ... *carved* teeth. Oh, yes, and with an AK-47 slung over his muscular arm. As tall as I was, I had to look up to him.

"And you pretty young ladies are ... ?"

Sorry Mom, for a moment I forgot the constant reminder about not talking to strangers in a forest, or anywhere else for that matter. We answered his questions like two silly puppies trying to please their master. This made me realise how dangerous he actually was. A charmer, with a gun. What a strange combination.

Jasmine thought he was amiable, but a part of me couldn't help but be suspicious. We talked some more and after a while he led us to a cave and invited us in.

I said, "No Sir, we are in quite a hurry," but he insisted, so we went with him.

We were quite astonished when we went in, as there were gold crowns and jewels right in front of our eyes.

"Look!" Jasmine whispered, pointing excitedly.

There was my diamond ring among the treasures. I asked the stranger where he got it all and he said he bought it.

"Yeah, right," I thought, knowing he was lying.

I took the ring while he wasn't looking and whispered to Jasmine to run. She made it to the exit in time, but the stranger (whom I now knew as John) grabbed me by the arm. Before he could get me to the ground, I swiftly threw the ring to Jasmine and told her to go to Grezelda and ask her to help me get out of here. Jasmine ran as fast as her short legs could carry her, before John could shoot.

Later, I found myself trapped in a dark dungeon with only iron bars separating me from hissing, tropical snakes. John came in with my favourite plate of food ... that also contained a sleeping potion. Weariness and hunger dissolved my common sense and I ate the food. Just before I fell asleep, Jasmine and Grezelda came flying in – on a broom! They hoisted me on the broom, shot John with a type of sleeping-potion bullet and we then flew him all the way to my house.

The three of us tied him up in my dog's kennel with only water to drink (out of a bottle of course!).

Chapter 5

The next morning, we told our parents and siblings our unbelievable tale. I felt better, so we took John to the police. We got a R90 000 reward for catching a criminal with a bounty on his head, which we then split amongst the three of us. I was extremely thrilled my ring had found its way back to me, that Jasmine and I had overcome our fear of spiders and that Grezelda was not afraid to be out in the open anymore. Prolonged exposure to sunlight also improved her skin and complexion. It became less green and more brown in colour and oh yes ... she now teaches wilderness survival skills over the weekends from my daddy's garage. Jasmine and I handle the part about spiders and snakes.

Are you afraid of spiders and being alone in the wilderness? Maybe you should come around.



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2016 selection



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