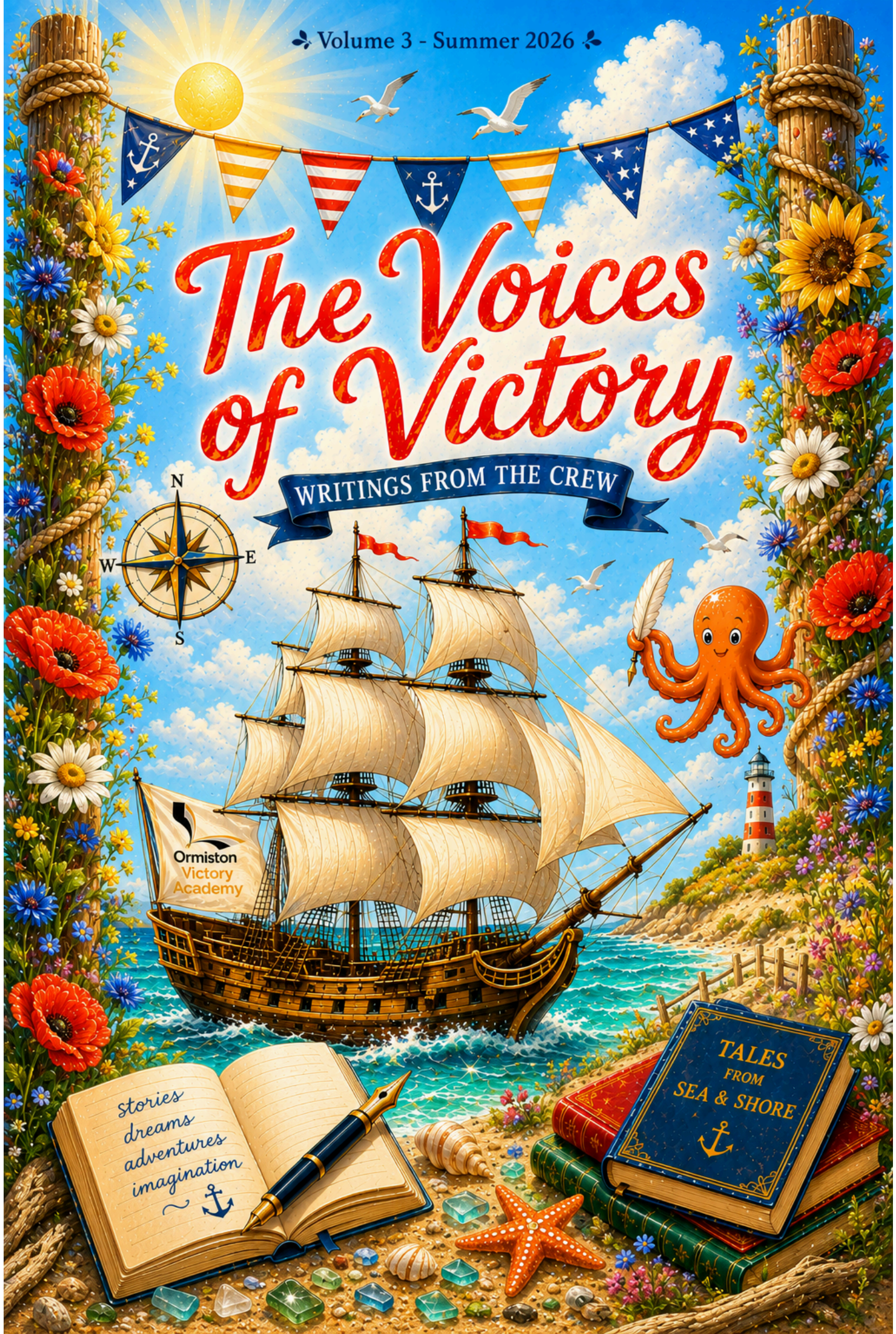


Volume 3 - Summer 2026

The Voices of Victory

WRITINGS FROM THE CREW





Welcome to the Summer 2026 edition of *Voices of Victory*, created by Ormiston Victory Academy's Creative Writing Club, where young writers set sail on journeys of imagination and creativity. Within these pages, you will discover a collection of original pieces that showcase the unique voices, ideas, and perspectives of our students.

Each story, poem, and reflection offers a voyage into a different world, inviting readers to explore new horizons and discover the creativity of its author. Together, these works celebrate the power of words, the courage to share ideas, and the joy of storytelling.

Alongside these written journeys, we are delighted to feature illustrations created by members of the Art Club, whose artwork helps bring selected stories to life and adds another creative voice to this collection.

We are immensely proud of the dedication and talent of our young writers and are delighted to share their work with you - our students, families, staff, and the wider community.

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'Friends' - Alia

Hard words

Harder hits

Hurt

Alone

Forgiveness

Betrayal

Regret

Do you still want me to smile?

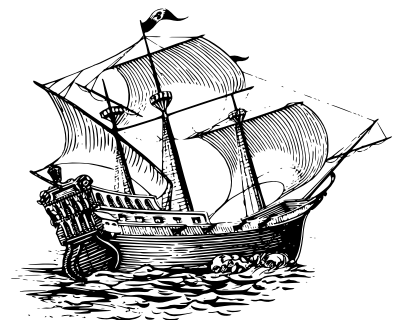


'School' - Praise

Sitting writing staring
Chatting joking playing
Solving calculating drawing

Doodle listen share
Remember again
Homework tests exams

Tiring boring geometry
Fun exciting PE
Distracting brain-cracking English



'Dying' - Alia

Run

Hide

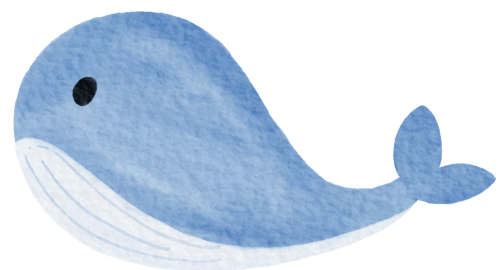
No escape

Yet it's almost freeing memories fly past you waving goodbye.

The people around you, fading away.

The people you love becoming clearer.

And then dark, nothing there but you, alone but peaceful.



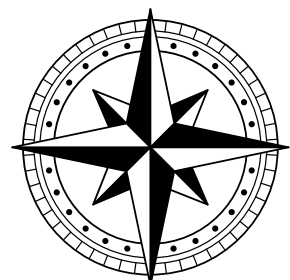
'Little Rock' - Belle

the birds pecking away
I'm wasting away
I quiver
under the Crushing weight
I squirm
under their piercing glare
I wonder
what did I do to deserve this
and then I remember
they are white doves
I am not
I am a
brown worm.



'Rats' - Elise-Louise

No one likes rats they're gross and steal food
All they do is eat, sleep and poo
They sneak in houses,
Even in a garage,
They just need to camouflage .



'Calm Down' - Praise

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy

a..b..c..d..e..f..g..h..i..j..k..l..m..n..o..p..q..r..s..t..u..v..w..x..y..z

deep breath deep breath out

how do you calm down

12345678910

1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10

Finger breathing

Do these methods work?

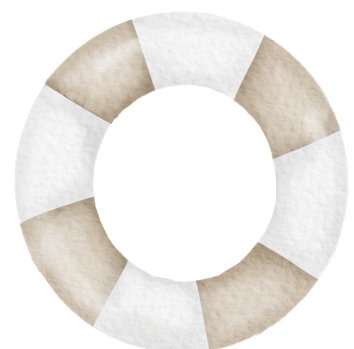
How do you calm down

Punching pillows

Screaming in pillows

Do these method work

How do you calm down



'How?' - Lucy

All that's left,
All that's now,
All through this,
I just ask how?

How they got there,
How they knew,
In their minds,
What when through?

Was it the sound?
Was it the sighs?
Was it the quiet,
Emotional cries?

Was it laughter?
Was it games?
Was it them?
Who's to blame?

Mystery stays,
The silence is thick,
Who is guilt,
Now to pick?

What it him?
Was it he?
Was it her?
Was it she?

Was the thunder,
Louder that night?
Did the stars,
Shine just as bright?

Or were they dimmer?
Hiding in shame.
A single tear drop,
Hard to tame.

Crystals in the moonlight,
Shadows through the trees,
Will anyone be begging,
Down on their knees?

I hear the door open,
And voices flood the room,
Screams and shouts,
Making my ears go boom.

I try to stop it,
Cover my ear,
But nothing could stop me,
From what I was to hear.

Every tear drop,
That falls from my cloud,
Make me keep,
On wondering how?



'Dear Future Me' - Belle

Are we the person we longed to be?
Do we have the life we dreamed of?
Are we reading this comfortably in our gorgeous house?
Or stuck in a Costa as we can't pay for Wi-Fi?
Have we got any kids? Pets?

Have we still got our curiosities?
Twinkles in the eyes?
I hope so
I hope for luck, love, life
Have we got everything we wanted?

The questions are endless
The future is scary, unpredictable
All I can hope for
Is smooth sailing but
We know things can't always go our way,

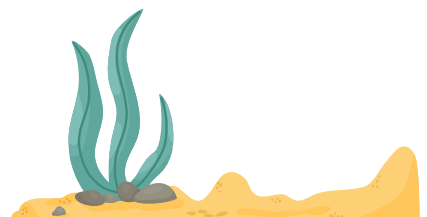


'War' - Praise

Bombs, bullets, airplane
The world feels like a daze
Ones plain fields now war plain
Cloudy misty foggy bad days

'Final Bow' - Belle

And the show, Begins
getting used to the routine
I accept its end



'The Person I'm Becoming' - Anonymous

Will I long for the past?

Will I think back and miss what I had?

Will I wish never I grew up?

Will I wish never I gave up?

Will I still climb trees?

Say fairies are in the leaves?

I hope for a future where my heart and mind are free,

I hope for a future where animals are safe in the sea,

Is my vision true?

Is our dream finally a reality?

Maybe not,

Hopefully though,

Maybe?

No..don't say so.

Future me ,

This cant be.



'If I Were' - Belle

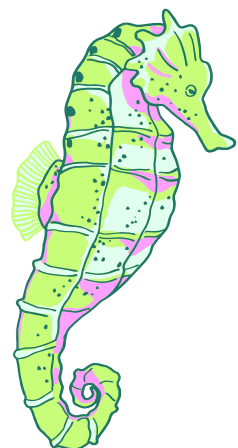
If I were a panda,
eating lots would be considered normal
and the fat on my belly,
would be considered
cute

If I were a bird,
I would soar
High in the sky, I
Would be considered
Beautiful

If I were a lion,
Leader over all,
Others would listen to my voice, my words,
Would be considered
Powerful

If I were a seahorse,
my looks would be iconic,
A perfectly shaped body
would be considered
Graceful

but I'm a girl,
I'm not cute or beautiful
powerful or graceful
I'm just me,
sometimes I wish I was more



'Weather Today' - Praise

Marvellous sunshine with gleaming smiles
Wide blue sky going on for miles
Views and views of endless scenery
Vast ocean of trees and greenery

Oh, how I wish these times will last
Never thinking of the past
Never playing back times of sunshine
Sitting staring at a dim and foggy coastline

Heavy clouds hung tightly to the sky
looking like they are about to burst
Like bullets the rain plummets to the ground,
The wind, like a boxer, pounds and pounds

What happened to these days of glitz
Why is this all in the past so quickly?
Maybe it's just that good things pass by swiftly
We may as well enjoy these days of bliss.



'Summer is Soon' - Hannah

Summer is soon,
Life will be new,
Lying on the beach,
Maybe for you.

For us it will be,
Out for long walks,
And not by the sea.

Spending time outdoors,
Or playing games,
For hours is fun.

Whether at the beach,
Or playing games,
I hope summer creates,
Many special days.



'It' - Praise

The thing lived under the bridge

It smelt

It looked horrible

It was it

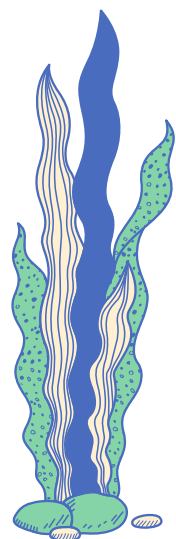
It had ears

It's ears where as big as it

It's eyes were huge

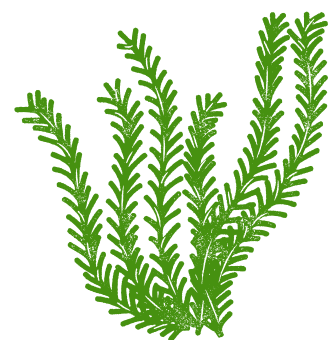
It's faces were horrible

It was it



'I Wish,' - Belle

I want to cut off
My stomach,
be like those girls I'm following, a
Flat stomach.
I beg for no
Body hair,
no more feeling insecure when I wear shorts,
perfectly smooth.
I demand
Whiter teeth
like those actors, their
perfect smile.
I ask for no
Double chin,
able to look down without worry like a model,
no insecurity.
I wish I didn't feel like this,
I wish I didn't feel bad about myself,
I wish I didn't feel insecure,
I wish I could just accept
me.



'Years' - Elna

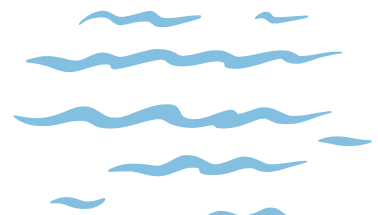
I am flying
People cheering
He catches me
Spins me round and round
Does not let me go

Slower now
Still the occasional spin
Things feels calm
Relaxed

Fast clapping
Hard to keep up
People moving
No stopping
Not any time to waste

Three steps
Stop
Turn around
Three more

Swaying side to side
Holding each others hands
All excitement now gone
One slow spin
The music ends



Nothing - Lucy

Screams, shouts, pouts. People run everywhere. But me. Me. I stay. Watch all the commotion. I'm the cause, but I did nothing wrong. I was ill. A regular, normal person. But I'm a mystery. No one knows what I know. Absolutely no one. Not even my parents. So here I am. All alone. Abandoned. Forever. No one cares. No one knows. No one pays attention. They just want to get away. From me. My life. My everything. I'm ignored. Invisible. I wish I'd never been born. But here I am, an unnecessary, useless thing. I'm not even a person. Not anymore. I'm nothing. An insignificant piece of nothing.

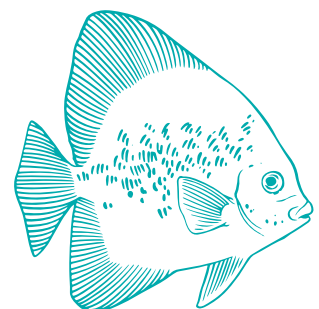
But what can I do? I can't speak. Whenever I do, something disappears. A piece of my soul slowly leaves me. Not really. But it feels like it.

The words ring in my head. Swirling all around. Bouncing out of my head and into my ears on and on and on. People scream it. "YOU'RE NOTHING."

Why? Why me? What did I do to deserve this? The world hates me now. I have no friends. No family. No pets. No nothing.

What do I do? Everyone is gone. All I had has disappeared in a split second. How is it possible? What has the world got against me? I do everything I'm supposed to; the only bad things I do are to my older sister and when I tell her I hate her, but I don't mean it. I never have and never will, but now I'll never see her again. Nor my parents. My whole life has been taken like that.

I'm all alone. Deep down, I always knew I was. I was never popular at school; I only had two friends, and now they're gone.



The hospital is now empty; only the victims of my unknown powers remain. Cursed forever. I'm glad it's only the doctors and nurses and a couple of others. At least all my family got out. I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I harmed them.

I had no idea I was contagious. I don't know where I got it from. I just woke up in the hospital one day with about a dozen nurses and doctors around me.

One by one, it came. An odd marking appeared on their faces, but different to the one on my face. Mine was a cross between a star and a flower, but theirs looked nothing like mine. It was like a person trying to run but was stuck, and it just kept spreading and spreading and spreading and spreading until they were covered head to toe and they turned to stone.

Their eyes all shut, and they began to crack until they broke into a million pieces, all because they touched me.

For some reason, it's not as exciting as I thought it would be. In the movies, they get to turn whatever they touch into gold, which sounds pretty fun, but not for me. My power only works on people. I turn them into stone when we touch, and then they crack and break to smithereens. I don't know how to stop it.

I start to cry. The hope of being fixed drains with every tear. I cover my face with my hands, but it hurts. In my hand, a piece of rock is stuck. But not normal rock. It's blue. Not a sapphire. A physical rock. But blue. No bigger than a pebble or those tiny little stones you find on the driveways of people's houses. Or the tiny stones you find in the shallow part of the sea that get stuck in your feet and in between your toes.



I took it out and put it on the side, but it fell. Fell right on the remains of a nurse, and you could see her golden hair peeking through the rubble and then disappear again.

Then she emerged from the powder of rock, but as if she hadn't just been turned to stone, like she was cooking and dropped flour all over her. She was grey and looked like something straight out of a horror film.

I screamed in terror, and she touched me to calm me down, and when she saw her blackened hands, she went to the sink to wash it off. I was too amazed to say a thing. I stopped screaming as I watched it wash off with ease and show her true, pink-tinted skin colour. My mind was blown as she touched me again and led me to sit down on the bed, and she didn't turn to stone. I don't know how, but she stayed human, after checking I saw that the blue stone had disintegrated.

The nurse asked what happened, and I explained to her everything. Something about her made me know I could trust her. I told her how I went hiking with my parents and sister, and I fell on some rocks and went unconscious, and that the next thing that I knew was that I was here in hospital with doctors and nurses turning to rock and turning to powder in seconds simply because they touched me.

She took her hand off my arm immediately but still didn't turn to stone. I told her that for some reason it no longer worked on her as she stared at her hand in confusion. I told her about the blue stone, and she suggested we go to the mountain to get more, but then she asked me a few questions.

She asked me what mountain I hiked, and when I responded with, "I don't remember," she asked me if I could remember where we were, around but again, I said "I don't remember". Every question she asked,



the only words I could splutter out were “I don’t remember;” and the annoying thing was I could remember, but something just wasn’t letting me say it.

We were doing the Three Peaks Challenge. We were on the last mountain, Mount Snowdon. We were in North Wales, and when we had finished, we were going home.

I’m not going home anymore. I’ll never see my room again. What if I’m incurable? Yes, I saved the nurse, but can I save me? Am I unfixable?

Different. A word I was always scared of being. Am I really nothing? Nothing at all. A worthless lump of flesh and bone. I’m not important. Neglectable. Pointless. Irrelevant. Call me what you will. You may as well just call me nothing. Because that’s exactly what I am.

I’m useless. I have no reason to be in this world. I don’t deserve a place. I’m what makes the world broken. Nobody else. Just me. I’m the cause of everything. Everything bad.

My curly hair dangled at my side, and more tears rushed from my eyes. She pulled me in for a hug as she saw the tears drop onto the bed.

And just then I saw it. But barely out of the corner of my eye. A piece of paper. I asked the nurse for a pen. She gave me a confused look, but then passed me the pen on her lanyard. I snatched the paper off the side and began to write and I wrote more than I’ve ever written before. When I was finished, I practically threw the paper at the nurse. I was so eager for her to see it.

I’d written everything on that piece of paper. The nurse’s eyes lit up with every word she read. I had explained everything. She then told me to follow her and, believing she could be trusted, I did.



She took me to a lift, and before I could say a word, we were underground in a level of the hospital I didn't know existed.

We hit the floor with a hard thud as the lift stopped about 12 metres below the familiar grassy ground. From floor to ceiling were two dozen glass boxes. All but 4 were inhabited by one normal-looking person. Except one thing. They weren't...normal.

And were very far from being it. All of them were lying on the floor with a lifeless stare aimed towards me as if telling me that this was my fate. Death. A thing that never seemed to venture towards me, but it seems to have gotten over its fear. Slowly creeping in my shadow, ready to snatch me up into an everlasting life of misery.

Wherever I go, I'm alone. All who I trust stab me in the back. I already know what the nurse will do. She'll get the rock, but then she'll kill everyone she can and frame the whole thing on me. This type of thing happens to me a lot, but never this extreme.

The weight of the world lay on my shoulders, and that's all I could think about as she carelessly threw me on the cold stone ground. I'm an obvious target. Easily tricked. People use me to protect themselves. If I died, the amount of people that would show up to my funeral is so little. So minor that I could count them with one hand. I hope that I at least get to say goodbye to the five people that cared about me.

My parents both had no siblings, and both my grandparents died a few years ago, so the only people are my two friends from school, my parents and, even though she'll never admit it, my sister. She always hides that she actually cares about me.



As the nurse ascended the lift, everyone then sat up, intently staring at me with a slight bit of confusion. All of these people look about 30-years-old, so it must be weird for them to see a 12-year-old girl like me.

Out of nowhere, the eldest man, who had light grey hair and a long beard, then spoke. He asked me why I was here. But I couldn't answer, so all I said was "I don't know," and I genuinely didn't.

I then explained that I thought the nurse was nice and that she was going to help me, but I was wrong. Very wrong.

They then, one by one, all said their names and why they were there. There was Harry, Isla, Ellie, Oliver, Henry, Lily, and Willow, to name a few, all with an odd ability. Like being able to turn whatever they want into whatever they want; like turning a fan into a hairbrush or a lamp into a bottle of water.

Then it was my turn. Everyone was staring at me, all but one with a smile.

Tom was his name. The person not smiling, but later on someone told me he'd been here the longest. For 25 years. Or so Isla said. If I was him, I'd be grouchy too. Probably more emotionless than him. I'm a very sensitive person, and I don't know how I'll cope without my family and friends.

It's been about a week now, and the nurse leaves the TV on, but only on the news and then takes the remote with her. She only leaves it on the news so we can see all the destruction she does to ruin our lives. It's surprisingly been quite quiet, but she's just lurking in my shadow, waiting to pounce. I can't believe I ever trusted that sociopath.



I only recently found out her name. Sarah. That's her name. A lovely name, but not for her. She is not, in any way, lovely.

You can always hear her coming. Her high heels click-clacking down the stairs and across the corridor. Click-clack. Click-clack. Click-clack. It's unmistakable. Those torturous steps. She always has a new way to frighten us.

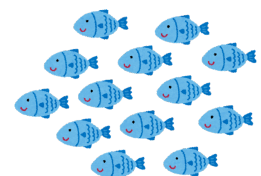
50. Five-zero. 50 missing person reports. 23 people seen, turned to smithereens. It's the only headline. If I've done the maths correctly, that's 73 people that Sarah has killed. That nasty little trickster.

So many people gone just because I'm a bit clumsy and tripped over my untied shoelaces. Even though I know I'm not, I can't help feeling guilty. If I had just tied my shoes when I realised the laces were untied, none of this would have happened, but no. I just have to go and be me and make the world a more miserable place for everyone else, myself included.

That's when I heard it. Quiet but still there. I was huddled in a ball, crying about what a failure I am when the small whisper crept into my ears. My head popped up in excitement as the small voice told me to come closer. Small noises were made and I could barely hear what was being said, but I managed to make out the words, "this way".

I edged closer in curiosity, checking behind me to make sure no one was watching me, and as I went to touch the wall...it...wasn't...there. It was gone. I could just walk straight through. But it wasn't a good idea.

People had heard about my power, and I was a wanted criminal. I saw posters up. All over the place. Saying that if I was found, the person



that found me would be rewarded with £10,000. A prize like this means I'm VERY wanted, and there's constantly at least one person roaming the streets looking for me.

I saw a clock above one of the posters, and it said 4:55pm, and Sarah always comes down to give us dinner at five. I snatched up the poster off the wall and ran.

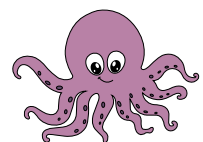
I managed to make it back to the wall and into my room just seconds before Sarah started coming down the lift. Our dinner was leftovers from the patients.

When Sarah left, I was ambushed by questions about where I was and how lucky I was to get back just before Sarah came. I pulled out the poster from my back pocket, and everyone's jaw dropped to the floor. Many remarked that they'd never seen such a high amount of money for a wanted person.

A voice from the background agreed, making me scream. I recognised the voice. It was the whisper. A shiver darted down my spine, making my back tingle. I could feel them edging closer. Slowly, I turned my head around until I could just barely see who it was. I recognised them instantly.

His name was Isaac. He goes to the school I used to go to, before I was trapped by Sarah, and he started to explain that he wanted to help me. He went on for ages about how unfair he thought it was that me and the other 20 people here were trapped and isolated from the rest of the world.

When he was finally finished with his speech, he said how he was going to help us. First, he said he'd help me and try to create an antidote.



We ran through the wall, and I promised everyone I'd be back soon. He walked me to his dad's house, who took us up Mount Snowdon. We gathered the rock, carefully this time and being sure not to fall. If any of us did, it would start all over again. We had gloves on so we didn't touch it, and we all had a plastic bag to put it all in.

A small buzzing began at the back of my head. Small noises that started to make out words. The start of it all.

Everything's changed since then; I can no longer turn people to stone. I can't stop thinking about the things they called me. I was a threat, and Sarah is keeping it that way, but if I can't turn people to stone anymore, soon, she won't be able to either, and all of this will be fixed. Hopefully.

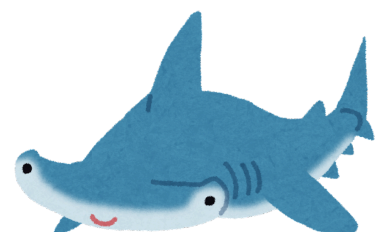
We filled up the bags with the stone and headed down the mountain, ready to try and fix everything.

We had just one small problem. We knew that all the dust of the people Sarah killed was kept in jars, but the problem was that we didn't know where they were kept.

Isaac's dad drove us back to the hospital, and I snuck back in. Everyone was so happy to see me; even Tom managed a smile.

Then, I realised someone was missing. Lily was gone. I asked where she was, and everyone's faces dropped. As I was told, I broke down in tears. How could I let this happen? I was only gone for a month.

Lily took the blame; she told Sarah that she told me to leave. She had to pay the price. Sarah took no mercy; that's something you can't forget, especially if you're stuck here.



I started to cry, the tears running down my face, making the ball of rage inside me grow even larger. Lily took her life to save mine.

Tears weren't fixing anything; they never do. They often just make things worse; the comfort makes them unbearably hard to keep them in. People say that they're a way to get rid of the emotions, that they're a way to let them flow right out of you.

For me, they're a free pass for more emotions to tip me over the edge and make me lose all sanity and my temper. People call it a tantrum, but it's not; it's a cry for help, a reaction to more emotions than known to man. A way to let you finally be free.

Isaac began to rub his hand against my back, and people kept saying how amazing and kind it was that she did that, but that made the tears come faster. I calmed myself down with some deep breaths and blinked away the rest of the tears.

I will forever be grateful for what she did, and when I'm free, I'll do something to honour her.

Isaac and I showed them the bags and explained how we needed to find where the human dust was kept. To our surprise, Tom knew where it was, but after he explained how he knew, it all made sense. He'd heard it on the news, and while we were all caught up in everything that's been happening, he'd been watching it, and he told us that it was kept in a cabinet on the fourth floor of the hospital.

The hospital right above us.



Isaac and I went to the wall, my heart pounding. The footsteps of Sarah crept into my ears, and I knew we had to be quick. We slipped through the crack and ran, ran for our lives, ran like we were being chased by our worst nightmares.

Right now, that worst nightmare was Sarah.

We crept through the streets, making sure we weren't seen. We were so close, yet so far away. Excitement and nerves ran through me, hoping we wouldn't fail, hoping we wouldn't get caught.

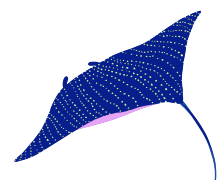
I could see the entrance of the hospital at the top of a long alleyway of stairs. Alleys have always crept me out; I always expect some creepy, old man to pop out of nowhere and do something to me, but I've never known what.

When we reached halfway, I stop, gasping for breath. I start shaking, and I fall to my knees, too weak to keep myself standing.

I start to overthink it all. It's just what my brain does, and I can't stop it; I can turn and walk along the beach into an everlasting circle of doom with one silly thought. I was now overthinking this. What if it goes wrong? What if we get caught? What if---

I get cut off. All my thoughts stop. The world stops. I suddenly feel... free.

I realise a pair of arms are wrapped around me. It is Isaac. I don't know why, but the small gesture of a hug was the thing that always made me feel okay. I'd never realised it before now, but that one hug made me feel like I never had before, it made me feel cared for and loved, and after months of living through torture with Sarah, that's all I really needed.



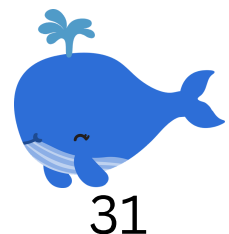
We made it to the top of the stairs, my heart racing. I was about to open the door when an arm shot out in front of me. I looked over at Isaac, who shook his head. I then noticed the chatter and commotion from inside the hospital.

How were we supposed to get in?

We walked away from the hospital and began to discuss what we were going to do.

We needed to be sneaky, unnoticeable; we needed to blend in. We decided to pretend to be visitors, wear disguises that still made us look like normal people. We found some cheap clothes on the street and put them on; we looked nothing like we normally did.

We snuck into the hospital, went up the stairs and saw the cabinet but also saw...



No Way Back - Elna

Crash! Thunder boomed as lightning streaked across the merciless sky. Rain beat down on me, trying to rip me apart, and finally I realised what I had done – and that I could not turn back. Back to the forest, back to my life, back home.

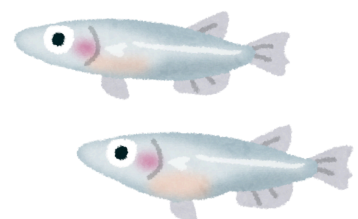
In my effort to stay alive, everyone else died. All the innocent people trying to help me were gone. The one living friend I had left abandoned me, leaving me alone, lost, and uncertain. I looked into my light bag, trying to see what I had left, but all hope had vanished.

Now I regretted my decisions, but how could that help? The rain thrashed against me while deafening thunder boomed through the mountains surrounding me.

“Help me! Help me! Make me go back in time! To save my sister... to save my mum... to save me! If you must take someone, take me! Take meeee...”

Tears streamed down my face as my whole body shook and I fell to my knees. I used to think I knew what pain was, but only now did I truly realise. Death began engulfing me, pulling me away into my dreams, but heaven was only another nightmare.

I woke up shuddering back into reality, wishing I could return to sleep where nightmares consumed me – because anything was better than here.



Descriptions of a WWI Trench

Angelina

As I walk down the crooked trench stairs, I can feel the discoloured mud swallowing my boots. The bitter air filled with the stench of men who haven't showered in weeks shatter my nostrils.

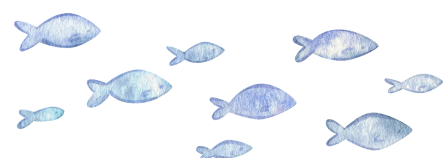
The bed was anything but comfortable and the walls felt like a cae, seeming to close in on me while I sat wondering if I'd ever make it out of this disgusting place. I lay there, motionless, watching the ceiling light flicker on...off...on...off.

Ethan

As I wake up to the sound of guns firing and grenades being thrown I remember just how bad and lonely this war is.

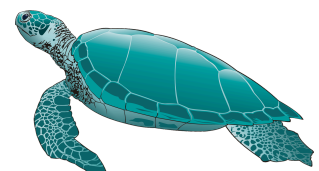
As soon as I stand up to stretch, I am yanked away by my lieutenant. I'm confused at first, so I question his reason for pulling me out of the dugout unexpectedly. He tells me I'm needed on the front line for support.

As we near the front, I see dead bodies everywhere. A gruesome smell, like decaying animals filled my nose. As I focus my eyes on the distance, I see the wet, dripping barbed wire surrounding the narrowed no mans land. The line spreads at least 50km in either direction; this war is out of control.



White Blood - Elna

Bang, I hit the ground. My brain is swirling; the only thought that is clear is that it can't be true. I feel the blood draining from my head, but I am reluctant to tell myself the truth. That I am dying all alone at the back of my own garden just because I wanted to climb that stupid tree. I wanted pride, I wanted to prove my dad wrong, yet that was all a waste of time, as death was welcoming me in. As I closed my eyes, the last thing I saw was a flash of orange in the trees, and the last thing I heard was a scream, my sister's scream as she ran, telling me not to leave her. But I couldn't, I had to go.



Journey's End - Anonymous

I clutch the rifle; my hands weakening. The only thing my ears catch is my breathing. We were expecting a raid today, but so far, at 3pm, nothing.

I notice Hibbert's face, his lips tucked away, his eyebrows raised, THE look in his eyes. I guess it's nice to know someone who's been in my shoes.

I get a break at 3.10, so not much longer. Time slowly ticks, and I'm nearly there. I can't take my biceps screaming any longer.

Stanhope calls me to signal it's time, then I head over. Mason hands me a bowl. "What's this?" I ask.

"Yellow soup, sir."

Without hesitation, I slowly but surely sip it till it's gone. "Thank you, Mason."

Bang. Chaos erupts.

Stanhope shouts to make sure everyone heard it, then calls me outside. "You'll need to fight, okay?"

"Okay," I respond, luckily not feeling as worried as I thought I would. I snatch my rifle from the hook, then put on my helmet. I run out, but stay undercover (just to be safe). Ahead, I see the barbed wire; the stained blood gives me flashbacks from Osborne's death.

"Think positively, Raleigh," I say in my head.



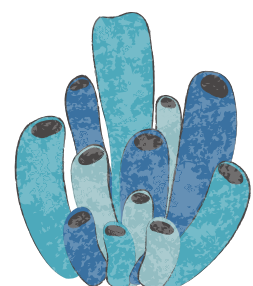
The thoughts disappear as I see a man next to me suddenly drop. A bomb hits the edge of the trench and debris flies everywhere.

I constantly hear the sound of bullets leave their guns to hopefully find a new home. I am the home now. A bullet stabs my back, and I collapse.

Stanhope sprints over to check me, then carries me inside. I flop on a bed, the relentless pain keeping me awake. My legs feel stiff, then they slowly disappear. “M-m-my legs,” I try to whisper.

He hears me, “I know.”

Blood leaks from me, changing the white duvet to red. It flows like a small river, and before I know it, I’m struggling for breath. Stanhope is on his knees, providing support for what could be my final moments. It’s like a timer for a bomb. Tick, tick, tick, and it’s all over.



The Crimson Pact of a Thousand Graves - Millie-Rose

A nobleman, executive for unspeakable crimes, returns from the grave every full moon– each time he inhabits a new body, each time more monstrous– bound by a pact that can only be broken by spilling the blood of his last living heir.

Unfortunately, during the fateful night, the heir had arrived to London.

The storm did not merely rage– it howled, shrieked, clawed at the very bones of Dreadmoor castle as though the heavens themselves sought vengeance upon that accursed place. Lightning spilt through the stained-glass windows. The flashes revealed jagged fragments of white light in the sky. And in these terrible flashes, one almighty glimpse– if one dared– the gallows still stood high upon the hill surrounded by angry rain and shrouded in mist.

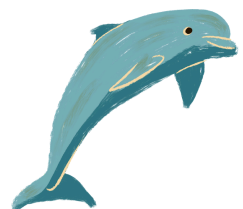
They had hung him three times.

And three times he had died.

Yet no man or woman present that very night would ever swear, upon pain of eternal damnation, that the body placed in the coffin six feet under was completely... still.

For as the final spade of earth struck the lid, there came a rhythm of a heartbeat once more. Echoing throughout the entire graveyard. From beneath the soil, a slow, deliberate knock. Then again. And again. Three times more.

During the following night, thunder continued to groan like a restless giant, rolling across the darkened, flashing sky as though it were voicing all its pent-up anger and melancholy in the deep, aching murmurs. Inside the castle was a sleepy heir. The servant, usually



timid, had an eerily quiet side to him. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, he speaks up. "Your Grace, you have a visitor." He claps his hands together once, a sudden sound quickly jolting the maids. Signalling for them to help the Heir change out of his nightgown and into a formal, silk robe worn for meeting someone.

Once changed, the Heir stepped out of the room, mentally preparing himself for whatever duties then came.

"Hello, Lord Francis Cornelius." A female voice spoke. Startling him and making Francis snap his head up to look at the small lady before him. She had an odd, wicked grin but everything about her screamed something innocent. He shook off the uneasy feeling, ignoring how it sent shivers up his spine. He offered the fair lady a smile, nodding his head in acknowledgment whilst also being a silent "hello" in return.

The lady slowly began peeling off her gloves, letting out a quick, hyena-like cackle. The Heir was quick to falter and immediately staggered back, confused. She brushed off her skirt before adding, "you poor child. You really don't know who I am, do you?"

Francis cleared his throat before answering, "my lady, no. I do not. Am I supposed to?" He takes a slow step back, unsure if he was currently in danger or not. After all, how could such a small woman be so dangerous? The woman took a step closer, daring him to protest. Once she realised he had completely given into surrender by not saying anything– while also not wanting to seem rude if he does– her voice drops to a punishingly slow whisper. "You see," she grinned, all her canines on display. Too sharp to be natural. Almost as if she could devour him right now if she really wanted to, "death and I... have come to a mini altercation." A deliberate step forward again.

On cue, the lightning struck once more, illuminating the room in a blinding white before evanescent again. The ghastly blaze catching the poor oblivious Francis off guard.

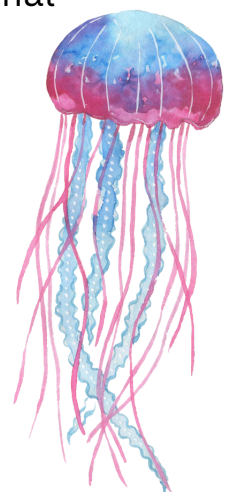


Suddenly, the Heir's eyes widen in pure terror... That smile. That tone. It was all so similar to the recently executed Duke who had tried in many times before in an attempt to murder him.

It was the face of what he feared most.

The lady pulls out an iron bar, grabbing his arm and shoving him hard into the wall behind him, knocking the air out of his lungs. He coughed vigorously, still trying to catch his breath. The iron bar had finally made contact to his left cheek, making his vision swim white as he started to see stars. He let out a gurgle of protest before being struck again. At last Francis had dropped to the floor, beaten to a pulp. Blood reached the corner of his mouth and poured from all kinds of unimaginable wounds. Especially the fatal wound in the back of his head which was split from ear-to-ear- only to make sure he had no chance of getting back up again. The lady laughed, emptying out his pockets before fleeing the scene. She bolted out of the doors and grabbed the nearest horse, instantly jumping onto its back and pulling a runner.

Years later, the lady, now also known as Beatrice Hope, had been living in a small Victorian house hidden by the heavy mist that clung to walls of retribution only she held after spilling the once Heir's blood. She had been living in secret, not a soul had dared to climb the hill of horrors. There had been a time- approximately just a little over a year now, after the Heir's death that is- a poor fifteen-year-old boy was pressured into documenting the hills and visiting the inhumane, wrecked ruin on top of the hill. It almost looked like an animal



had been ferally living there. Now, back to the boy. He was unnamed in any official records and referred to only by cruel nicknames too foul to repeat. Unfortunately on the day of visiting what was known as the "no-go zone" by many, he stumbled into the shadowy hill, invisible eyes glinting at him with a terrible hunger. Pacing through the scarce horrors only for him to never make a return.

At the summit stood what appeared, from a distance, to be the remains of some great animal– hulking, hollowed and half-consumed by earth and time.

Back to the present.

The hills remained untouched. The mist remained thick. And Beatrice Hope remained with her crooked house, waiting and listening for the prey known as humans.

For the wind did not behave as wind should.

It screamed. Sometimes whispered.

Not in words but in something almost like the victims' names often followed by her own.

Beatrice stood by the window, breathing slow yet hollow, almost unalive. The glass before her had long since stopped reflecting her properly. Some nights, it showed her standing just a moment too late. Other nights, it showed her standing somewhere she was not.

Then came the sound.

A knock.

Not at the door.

But beneath it.



From the floorboards.

Slow. Deliberate. Familiar.

Beatrice did not move.

Did not breathe.

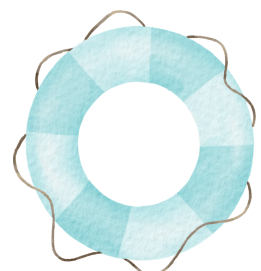
A second knock came harder, so violent she could feel it rattle beneath her feet, almost like something was trying to grab her.

And then—

A voice. Hoarse. Husky. Hushed. The deceased Heir's.

"Beatrice..."

Out of nowhere, a hand shot out from beneath the floorboards, grabbing her ankle with crushing force before dragging her into the depths of hell...



The Diary of a Young Girl - Jenna

Monday 18th May 3021

Hi! I got this diary for my birthday. Right now, there is the start of a war. A war against the robots and humans. If you didn't know, the government made robots and AI thinking it will help with everyday living. Turns out they want to take over the world. My dad brought a flying car! Its red! Anyway, I have to go and get my food from the kitchen machine.

From Isla

Tuesday 19th May 3021

Hey! We went into hiding today. Most of the town is hiding in the basement of the castle. The King and Queen have set up an army of men. Luckily, Dad was just over the age limit. The castle supplies us food but we do have to pay a tax every so often.

Oh no! The bomb raid siren just went off! I will write again tomorrow!
Isla

Thursday 21st May 3021

Hi! Sorry I didn't write yesterday. There was so much going on. All the kitchen machine's broke! And 2 robots managed to get into the caste... luckily me mum and dad were all in the bath area (by ourselves).

Tomorrow the King and Queen are gifting us with a movie night themed in the 2026! I can't wait that was such a long time ago!

Dearest Isla

Isla's diary pauses for a year

Sunday 27th March 3022

Hi, I got taken by the robots. I don't know when I will ever be able to write again, this might be my last time. I had to sneak this in. Most



people got taken. Including one of the guards! We don't eat much. We only eat beans or rice and drink milk or water. I hate it. We also had to shave our hair. I feel so bad for everyone here, including myself. We sleep on rocks. I didn't even know they were still around because so many people stole them and used it for Isla the war. I just want to see my Mum and Dad again. They got sent to different areas.

Dearest Isla

Monday 28th March 3022

Hi! Luckily, I was able to hide in the toilets and write to you. I only have a few mins though so I might get cut off. Do you think it's weird that the robots time us taking a shower and going to the toilet? I think it is. But the food is sooo nice. It's better than the tablets. It's like proper food from like 2020!

GUESS WHAT!?! My mum got sent to my area! But my dad is still not here though.

Tuesday 29th March 3022

Hi! Big news I forgot to tell you my mum was pregnant with a baby boy! She gave birth! His name is Charlie. Isla and Charlie. Has a ring to it. He is soooo cute. So our WHOLE family got put into a private room because of Charlie.

