

# **overture**

**literary magazine**

**hopkins branch**

**winter 2015-16 | kicks and giggles**



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# OVERTURE

KICKS AND GIGGLES; WINTER 2015-16

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This is *Overture Literary Magazine*, a new pursuit to expand writing, art, and imagination within the Hopkins Junior High School community. Join us as we share the creativity of students by publishing their work in a monthly magazine, distributed to Fremont City constituents.

In musical terms, an overture is an orchestral composition forming the prelude or introduction to a musical piece. Much like an overture in music, this creative writing program will serve as an introduction to the landscapes of creativity, self-expression, and imagination.

*Overture* strives to inspire imagination, foster literary and artistic talent, and promote creative growth by teaching middle school students how to develop their own creative writing or art styles through mediums not offered at their own schools.

The Winter 2015-16 theme, “Kicks and Giggles,” is a study on what makes people laugh. It’s about finding happiness in the small things and being able to find hilarity in our mistakes. After all, laughter is the best medicine.

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# SREETAMA CHOWDHURY; GRADE 8

## The Agent

Simran flattened herself against the wall, heart pounding. The enemy had almost seen her. Mentally, she berated herself for her carelessness. *Stupid, Simran. A few more seconds and you'd have been toast.* She took a deep breath, allowing herself to relax. After checking her weapon, she reviewed her position. She was the last member of her team standing; the rest had been taken down. She had one weapon. The enemy outnumbered her five to one. Her chances were slim. She could hear enemy agents approaching-- two of them, by the sound of their footsteps. *Brace yourself, Simran. And whatever you do, don't get hit.* Simran drew her weapon. Stepping out into the hallway, she fired two quick shots. The enemy soldiers fell with screams of rage and agony, and she smiled grimly. Two down, three to go.

*They'll never see me coming.*

She relieved her fallen foes of their weapons, adding them to her own arsenal. The more she had, she reasoned, the better her chances of vanquishing her enemies. *Where are they? They probably heard those screams. Ugh. I hate loud takedowns. Like, seriously. Have you never heard of stealth, people?* The sound of more footsteps interrupted her train of thought. "Shoot." They'd found her.

"You got that right."

The soldiers confronting her were battle-hardened veterans. They would be harder to take down than the two rookies she'd faced earlier. She'd be hard-pressed to defeat them. Unless... she suppressed a grin as she realized something: their leader was unarmed.

"Got what right, *Captain?*" Simran hoped that her mocking inflection and flashing eyes would distract the enemy, giving her time to carry out her desperate plan.

"Well, you're entirely at my mercy, aren't you?"

Good. She'd known he could never resist gloating. (It irritated her to no end, but it was quite useful at times.) As he cackled and bragged about how he'd overestimated her, she slowly maneuvered herself until she was standing in between the other two soldiers. "Are you going to shoot me yet?"

"If you insist." He gestured at his minions. "Fire."

She ducked. They shot each other.

"Why, you little..."

He never finished his sentence-- she shot him point-blank in one fluid movement. He fell to the ground, well and truly vanquished. Simran grinned wolfishly at him. She'd won. She'd avenged her team and upheld her honor.

"That," rasped the captain, voice trembling, "was the best. Game. Of paintball. Ever."

## Kindness and the Truth

“Hey, wake up or we’ll be late.”

Meril opened her lucent brown eyes, and saw that her best friend Mercy, was shaking her shoulders.

“We really need to hurry,” Mercy reminded.

Meril got up obediently, and folded her blanket neatly and as speedily as possible. She placed it nicely on top of her friend’s blanket.

She called to her friend, who was waiting at the front door, and said, “I am almost done.”

She grabbed her apron from the door hanger and tied it around her waist. Then, she closed the front door and hastily ran while following Mercy to the mansion.

The mansion was just across the street, and Meril and Mercy were there in no time. They slowed down when they came to the front yard. It was decorated with a beautiful variety of plants. They were roses, and they smelled like the strong perfume the female adults loved to wear. This reminded Meril that she wanted a home that was filled with laughter, roses, bougainvilleas, sweetness and love. But when another foreign thought faded in, she clenched her teeth in anger. Meril wished for nice clothes, but unfortunately, she was poor and helpless. Unlike her master, she had to wear thin and itchy clothes.

When Mercy saw that Meril was daydreaming, she stopped walking and reassured her that it would be better. Meril hesitated, then kept walking ahead. They arrived at the wellpolished door of the monolithic mansion. The door boy servant had already opened the door for them, so they went inside directly without ringing the bell.

Meril and Mercy hustled themselves into the kitchen and were ready to work. Meril made pancakes, and laid the pancakes down delicately when they were ready on an extravagant china plate. Mercy assisted Meril by spreading their master’s favorite syrup around the circular pancakes, and placed a sugary strawberry in the middle. Abruptly, a young female slave rushed in with a wooden pail of milk.

“Milk,” she said, almost out of breath. “The master wants milk.”

She beckoned Mercy for their master’s golden cup, and Mercy grabbed the cup and settled it onto the nearest island that the young child was standing near. The girl poured the white milk into the little cup with care. When she was done, she took the pail and went back outside. Meril took the little heavy cup from the island, and placed it on a tray with the pancakes. She hurried out to the dining room where her master was waiting petulantly.

The master was sitting on his delicately carved wooden chair, reading his daily newspaper. He was dressed in his best morning robe, and his hair was neatly combed.

“Master!” Meril squeaked, and hurried inside.

She accidentally tripped on the slippery floor and fell. The tray she was holding flew into the air and crashed into the master’s head. Milk dripped down to the master’s clothes from his forehead and the expensive china plate broke into many pieces. The pancakes landed directly on the master’s head, and his nicely combed hair was covered with sticky syrup. Everyone was astonished and shocked, but no one dared to talk. Meril bowed down to her master immediately and apologized three times.

“I am sorry, Master,” she begged. “Please forgive me.”

The master did not move, not even a single finger. "I am so sorry," Meril continued. "I will be very careful next time."

This time, the master answered, "There will be no next time. You are not going to live, slave."

When Meril heard the word slave, she became angry. Her natural temper almost burst out of her lungs.

"I am really sorry, please forgive ME!" Meril shouted, and suppressed her tears. She knew what she had done was inappropriate and very disrespectful, but she didn't care, asking for forgiveness doesn't seem very deadly.

"Forgive you?" the master asked. "You turned my fine clothes into a mess, and you ask me to forgive you?" He stroke his beard, trying to find a harsh punishment for this slave and coughed.

"You are a disgrace, slave."

"We are not slaves!" Meril screamed.

"You are all ordered to serve me, because you will all die without me," he said.

"Yes, but we are not your slaves," Meril replied. She knew everyone in the house was now watching. "We are strong, and we are not afraid of you," she said, trying to sound confident. After Meril said this, the master struck her with his iron fist.

"No, I am your master and you are just a tiny slave," he said. "You are too feeble like other slaves and you have no other help."

Mercy stepped in and argued, "Yes, but we have friendships with other kids."

She helped Meril get up, and held onto her right hand. Meril took Mercy's hand and they ran back to their house.

"We need a plan," Mercy said.

"I know, a plan to stop this slavery," Meril said.

"But how?"

"We will find out tomorrow," Mercy said.

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The next day, Mercy and Meril brought a horde of their poor friends to their small cabin.

"We have to create a plan to win our freedom," they gibbered.

With their valuable friends, they discussed many ideas they could do. All of the children were so into the discussion that they forgot their orders from their masters. At noon time, Meril's master suddenly appeared.

He barged in and said, "Well, well, well, what do we have here, slaves?"

Meril took a step forward and answered, "We are rebelling against you. You cannot treat us this way."

"I can't?" the man questioned, "but I can with this."

He unzipped his bag and pulled out the malignant weapon and pointed it straight at Meril. He pushed the trigger, but just as the bullet flew into the air, Mercy pushed Meril out of the way, taking the bullet for her. A shrill cry came from Meril's throat. She kneeled down and cradled Mercy in her arms.

"Meril!" Mercy whispered, "Kindness is the key! The truth from your heart!"

Then, Mercy went limp in Meril's arms. Meril touched Mercy's palm and sadness came to her throat.

"She's gone," Meril whispered. Meril hugged Mercy to her chest, tears in her wet eyes.

"MERCY!" Meril wailed. The slaves began sobbing. The master, however, was quiet.

Meril wiped her tears away and got up. She peered apprehensively at the man who had his face down, and saw how perplexed he was. She remembered Mercy's last words.

"Kindness," she muttered, "yes, the truth from my heart."

Meril stepped forward to the murderer and said, "Sir, if this keeps happening, the whole community will die."

The man sighed.

"Sir, all of us are the children of the community," Her voice trembles, trying to wipe of the sad tears from her watery eye. "You and I are no different."

Meril continued, "Sir, please end this. Do not treat us like slaves."

"I agree."

A man walked into the cabin, followed by groups of his companions.

"I agree," he said, "We need to stop this."

The children suddenly stopped crying, and looked up simultaneously with wonder.

"We need to stop this," the man repeated, "We need to stop mistreating our own people."

Meril's teary eyes was suddenly filled with happiness and hope. "My friends, I believe that the girl is right," the leader confessed, and looked at his men. "Without these children, there will be no future for our community."

His followers nodded a sign of approval.

"We are sorry," the voices of the men said, "You are our children and we are sorry that we have mistreated you, threshed you so many times."

The children cried and cheered, "We forgive you."

After that day, the children and the adults unitedly lived happily ever after together. The adults stopped mistreating the children, and they started teaching the children many skills such as equal rights, statecraft, science, and self defense. Every morning, schools in the community were filled with chatter. Teachers discussed many advantages and disadvantages for the community with the kids. The children grew up together, and later, many became professional managers of many employees, workers, and teachers. Meril did not forget Mercy, for she was their hero who died with honor.

## The Disease Called Procrastination

Having trouble starting on your homework? Don't worry, many students experience this obstacle in their daily lives. Symptoms may include getting distracted, going on social media, or unconsciously putting off assignments. Reasons for this terminal disease might consist of an intense dislike for schoolwork, running out of pencils, or sleepiness. It can be diagnosed as... procrastination!

Whatever the reasons for procrastination are, it is hard to cure and very contagious. That is why countless students have it. However, there is one solution to this frightening problem: starting on your homework! Now, you might have realized the complication with this answer. The disease makes it hard to start on schoolwork, so how can you fight against it? You will never be able to cure yourself of procrastination!

Do not despair, though! There is still one other way to take your mind off this problem. That is to procrastinate and stall more! Sure, this will never truly cure you of the deadly disease, but it allows you to relax. Go watch some TV or eat pizza! The only trouble is that when you come back again to try and fight the sickness, you'll find that your case will have worsened. It will be even harder to overcome your procrastination.

I hate to break all of this information to you, but it had to be done. If it makes you feel any better, procrastination may be fatal. You have a high chance of dying under a mountain of homework. :)

**NAMRATA GOHEL & TAVISH  
MOHANTI; GRADE 7, & ALISON ZHANG;  
GRADE 8**

## How to Write a Pop Song

You think you can be a popstar? Well, hate to break it to you, buddy, but you can't...unless you read this guide! You may be scared everyone will hate your song now, but remember that everyone hated Picasso in his time, so I'm sure people will love you in hundred years or so. If Justin Bieber can do it, so can you!

Before you begin taking singing lessons, **FALL IN LOVE**. Take care that your boyfriend/girlfriend is good-looking so you can easily use flowery descriptions. They should also be a downright jerk, so you will be able to trash talk them to the full extent in your song. After this, break up dramatically. Congratulations! You now have the subject of your next song.

Now on to the musical part, which is considerably less important. Take singing lessons for an hour, proclaim your tutor "terrible", then say you will be going to discover your own style. "But now I can't sing!" you may wonder. That's fine, there's always autotune. And you don't need to know how to play an instrument either. That's why Garage Band© was created. Ready? Now on to the core part: creating your song.

Remember that first step? Take all your shattered, precious heart fragments and pour them into your lyrics. If you can't remember the heartbreak, then Google© someone else's experience and use that. Make sure to repeatedly cry about how much of a jerk your lover was and how naive your own radical emotions made you.

Wait! Let us not forget the one-liner that every listener shall reference in their daily conversation: the chorus. Boot up your laptop and go to **THE RHYMING DICTIONARY.COM** and string together any rhymes you can like, yeti and spaghetti! Drop the word love or any other "love"-related phrase in there, and no one will complain.

Perfect! Now you are on your way to becoming a reckless pop star, the next Miley Cyrus. And remember, if your song doesn't take off, it's just because the producers don't understand your unique style of overusing autotune. Plus, if you can't get a producer to accept your song, you can always hack the nearest station and broadcast your song across their channels!

## To Be A King

Fenrir stalked his prey, careful not to make a sound. His bleach white fur blended in perfectly with the falling snow. He bared his teeth and crept up to his prey. Once he was only a few steps away, he lunged. He cracked the seal's spine, killing it, and licked his bloodied maw. His skills hadn't degraded at all. He was a hunter.

He licked the blood from the finished seal and stalked back to his cave. A small area, stony and cold, just big enough for him. He curled up, looking out at the snowy expanse. It was his third day hunting in the snow, here in the south. His father, King Lycaon, had tried to stop him, but Fenrir disappeared anyway. He enjoyed hunting here in the south, where he was able to use what his ancestors had blessed him and his race with. The natural survival instinct. Fenrir had better instincts than the normal wolf, and he wasn't about to let them go to waste.

Fenrir watched the glistening snow powdering down turn into a fierce snowstorm. Tomorrow will be a fun day, he grinned. The soft sound of paws padding toward him reached his ears. He spun in a circle and snarled. No animal would ever sneak up on him. He wound up his hind muscles, ready to spring, and growled in the direction of the footsteps. A gray wolf padded out of the gloom of the tiny cave. Fenrir recoiled in surprise.

"Blair?????" he barked.

"Yes, Prince Fenrir." Blair bowed.

"What is my retainer doing out here?" Fenrir growled.

Blair grimly looked Fenrir in the eyes. "It is time for you to take the throne," Blair growled, "Your father is gravely ill. You have been away too long."

Fenrir snorted, "Him? Never, he's too healthy to be sick."

Blair only shook his head in response. Fenrir sighed.

"I don't want it," Fenrir snarled, "The throne is treacherous and the one sitting on it is simply a figurehead. I am happier as I am." Blair padded toward him.

"At least come out of this dangerous tundra," Blair insisted. I sighed. If only for today, I would listen.

After running for several miles, we slowed to a stop. I looked at Blair, a questioning look in my eyes. Blair was just as athletic as me and so I was surprised to see him stop. Blair turned to me.

"We have arrived," his piercing eyes met mine.

His eyes bored into me, and I blinked under the pressure. Why did we stop in the forest? I knew I would get my answer shortly so I didn't ask.

Blair spoke, "I will train you. You have the skills required for kingship and can see your enemies, but you do not treat the position as you should. You are too disrespectful!" I blinked at him. "The crown isn't a joke and shouldn't be taken lightly," he barked.

"There are aspects to be a king," I growled, "And among them is to be peace loving, a tactician not a warrior."

"Have you never heard of a warrior king?" Blair snorted, "Fight on the battlefield and fight for your people."

“The throne is looked at greedily by my father’s own advisors. They will sooner kill him as well as me and take the throne for themselves rather than let me take it.” I snarled.

“Take the throne to protect the people from them,” Blair recited, “After all, a king’s job is to protect his people.”

“I do not want it,” I howled angrily, “It restrains me, limits me. Give it to someone else.”

“You are best suited, Fenrir,” Blair spoke softly, “Change your advisors if you wish, but otherwise tell me. Why do you hate the throne so?” I found myself unable to come up with a satisfying answer. “Try it and see what it’s like, but before that do not judge.”

Blair turned and leapt toward my father’s domain. I hesitated and followed. I would at least visit my father. It was the least I could do.

### **10 Years Later**

“I still hate the throne Blair,” I said.

“Even though you sit on it, King Fenrir,” Blair smiled.

“Especially because I sit on it,” I laughed, my maw rippling. I looked wistfully at the moon. Life before the throne was enjoyable, but I had a duty to my people. I had come to realize it 10 years ago after Blair talked to me. This throne was what I needed to protect for the freedom of my people.

## The Shoe

He glanced at her, eyebrows cocked to one side and head tilted to the left.

“What? I still don’t understand!” he whined.

Jane heaved a sigh. “Let me explain this to you . . . *again*. Now, after I say rock, paper, scissors, you make your hand into a fist representing rock, flat palm representing paper, or into a sideways peace sign representing scissors. And then I do the same thing. So scissors beat paper, paper beats rock, and rock beats scissors. Got it?” Of course, Jane didn’t expect a five-year-old boy to understand this new concept right away but it had been three months and this was not foreign to him anymore. Although he never reached any progress, Jane taught him over and over again.

“Jane, it doesn't really matter now. Do me a favor, will you? Go take the remaining wood logs from the barn. We are running low.”

“Yes, Mother,” Jane reluctantly went out the house. Tommy crept towards the stove where his mother was preparing breakfast.

“When can I go to school? Janie went to school when she was five right? And I’m turning six tomorrow.” Tommy tugged at his mother’s sleeve.

Mother stared out the window blankly, her eyes lost in thought. She sighed. “I thought we had a discussion about this several days ago! Your Grandma and I will be hiring a tutor to come all the way here and teach you right at this dining table. As soon as we have enough money you will be learning how to read and write just like the other kids,” She replied solemnly while setting up the table.

Tommy trailed after her, “Why can’t I go to school and play with them kids? Why do I stay home by myself and study? Why does Janie get to go to school? I don’t understand!” Tommy protested loudly and almost began to wail.

Jane walked in the kitchen and bolted the door tightly, noticing the oddest thing. Her mother was trembling in fear. In her hand, she held a porcelain bowl of soup which jolted violently and before the kids realized, it shattered into pieces, leaving shards of the remaining bowl sharp and erect. The soup was spilled and their mother was weeping. Placing the logs of wood by the fireplace, she quickly went to her mother’s side.

“What’s all this commotion?” Grandma had been sleeping and awoke from the shattering of the bowl. She still wore her nightgown and was shivering from the morning chill. She stared at the ground in front of Mother and then slowly looked up at her face.

“Caroline? What ever is the matter?” Grandma was concerned, for she had never seen Mother look like this before. There was a moment of silence.

“Tommy will not go to school. He will stay home and learn from the tutor. Period!” Mother flared her nose and wiped off the stain of tears on her face. She cleaned up what lay in front of her, “Jane, you wouldn't want to be late. It’s best if you go now.”

The morning zephyr blew gently across the field; even in the winter, yellow weeds frayed, too stiff to sway in the light breeze. The dead field stretched all around their home, farther than the eye could see. The wind grew stronger and carried all the bits and scraps of dry weeds toward the eastern direction.

Jane did not understand why her mother was mad. She didn't understand why Tommy couldn't go to school either but knew best not to ask. She held her schoolbooks tightly and smoothed out her skirt, kicking up a cloud of sand, big enough to start a mini tornado. Her shoes, newly polished, were already covered in dust. She heaved a sigh and stared up at the horizon, another cloudless day, yet so gloomy and sorrowful.

A grin spread across Jane's face when she heard the running waters. *Almost to the Creek*, she thought. It was always referred to as the Creek by her people. The Creek was wide and stretched about thirty feet across. It was the Creek that separated the wealthy cities and the poorer villages. The Creek was the separation between yellow fields and luscious greens. Everything that needed to be done must require one to cross the Creek. There were no school, no shops, and definitely no luxuries in the villages. Jane was considered a fortunate girl. Most children in the villages didn't go to school due to lack of money. Because of her outstanding wits, Jane had qualified to attend school with the rich folks free of charge.

As she approached trees that signified the border of her land, she looked down upon the Creek. The stream here ran deep and strong. It was ferocious and never ceased to flow. The trees, maple and oak, stood tall over the running water. The branches hung low, every now and then, dropping a leaf into the water, and disappearing in the strong currents. They will never float back to the surface. All hopes were lost for them.

Jane stacked all her books in her left arm and walked to and fro, in search of the rope. It was this rope that Jane used to get across the Creek on her path to school. The village was too poor to install a bridge, and the wealthier citizens across the Creek couldn't care less. Jane clutched the rope tightly in her right hand as she prepared to swing over the creek bed.

\*\*\*

Tommy watched in amazement. His mother and grandma never allowed him to wander any further than the yellow fields. He snuck behind a maple tree as quietly as he could, managing not to crunch the leaves. He held his breath as his sister swung across the Creek and landed with a thump on the other bank. Curiosity overwhelmed him and Tommy was dying to go to school.

Fearing that he would be left behind, he did the same as his sister did, but he held the rope with both of his small, stubby hands. Panic gripped him, his heart pounding in his throat as he clutched the rope tightly, being suspended some fifty feet in the air. When Tommy landed on his bum, a sense of thrill went through him. He had successfully entered the Land of the Wealth. He leaned against a tree trunk and thought with satisfaction of his own accomplishment. After his heart settled, he quickly ran to catch up with Jane.

As he entered the Land of Wealth, he was amazed. The streets of the city were alive with people, bustling past the run-down buildings and avoiding the large puddles that spanned the roads. On street corners, poorly-dressed men who probably sneaked their way in the city sold newspapers or food from small carts. Women aired out laundry and sold clothes, and a few children darted like lightning from one stall to the next, slipping goods into their pockets on the way. He couldn't help but notice how people backed away as he approached. Tommy's attire immediately set him out as folks from the villages; his tattered and old breeches were smudged with dirt. Ignoring the fact that the people stared at him, Tommy followed Jane past the courtyard to a narrow, empty sided street between a pub and a bakery.

Finally, Tommy arrived at the school house. It was painted in a dark shade of red and some of the paint began to peel off, revealing the wood underneath. There were kids outside playing in the sand pit and on the swings but Jane sat in a corner under a tree all by herself, reading a book. Seizing his moment, Tommy glanced both ways and slipped by the window sill at the side of the school house. Struggling slightly to push the window open, his fingers shaking with exhilaration, he managed to

wriggle his whole body through the window. He sat at the corner, under a desk and waited for class to begin.

\*\*\*

“We three have already discussed about your birthday tomorrow. After school, Jane will go to Mr. Larry’s Store and get you a brand, new pair of shoes! Consider it a gift from all of us, lad.” Grandmother was excited to announce that the gift for the birthday boy would be different this year compared to previous years.

“Oh, really? Wow, cool!” Tommy exclaimed, trying hard to be surprised. He thought he could fool everyone, but not Jane. Jane knew him better than anyone else did in the family and had expected a different response. She ate her supper in silence, pondering over her day and figuring out why Tommy was not surprised.

After supper, both Mother and Grandma retired for bed. Tommy turned to the only other person at the dining table. Jane was staring at him with a nonplussed look on her face, and Tommy couldn’t help but ask.

“You knew, didn’t you?” he asked.

“I had my suspicions,” she admitted with a nod. “I figured the reason you weren’t surprised was because you followed me after school to Mr. Larry’s and saw me inspecting the price of the shoes, right?” not waiting for a reply, Jane continued. “I did actually have a weird day today. I felt like there was a shadow, lurking behind me, tracing my steps. You know what I’m talking about?” She proceeded to scold him, taking advantage of her authority.

“I can’t believe you! After Mother and Grandma repeatedly told you not to cross the yellow fields, you completely ignored it and followed me all the way to school! You could have been kidnapped, or worse, killed!” Jane hissed desperately. She glared at the floor and turned her head to the side, refusing to look at her brother.

After calming herself from the rage, she declared, “If Mother or Grandma ever knew about this, you will be in trouble. I will not tell them because tomorrow is your birthday. But only if you promise me to not do that again. And,” she paused, biting her lips. “I’m not getting the shoes for you. You don’t deserve it.”

Tommy gasped, eyes widening in horror.

“What?!” he breathed, reaching over to slide his hand over hers. “Jane, why?”

Jane, disgusted, shook his hand off without looking at him and left the kitchen.

\*\*\*

They sat around Tommy, wishing him a happy birthday. Mother and Grandma both began to tell Tommy about his father. He grew up listening to tales of a man whom he never met.

“Why hasn’t Janie returned yet?” Tommy had no idea who his father was and oddly was not interested. He realized that school should have been out about an hour ago.

“Maybe she needs extra time to get your present, dear.” Grandma replied.

This, Tommy knew was not true. Jane would not get him his present. He began to wait in agony and became anxious for her return. Minutes turned to hours and still, no sign of Jane. Just before the sky turned dark, the whole family began to worry.

They all decided to take a walk to school to see her teacher, Ms. Winfil. It was possible that Jane got detention or was in some kind of trouble. When they reached the creek, Mother held her hands back against Tommy’s chest.

“Why don't you stay with Tommy, Ma? I'll be fine on my own.”

“No! I want to follow you guys and,” Tommy's heart stopped. He didn't breathe. He didn't blink. For some reason, he didn't feel scared or sad or had the urge to cry, like his mother and grandmother did. He just . . . *froze*.

It was the shoe. The shoe Jane had intended to buy for Tommy's birthday. It sat at the edge of the Creek, on a piece of large rock that stuck up higher than any other. The currents would splash over every rock, wetting its surface. But not the rock with the shoe. It stayed dry and unharmed.

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There lies a bridge across the Creek. They call it The Bridge now. Tommy was allowed to go to school not because he turned six, but because of the Bridge. He walked slowly across the Bridge, emotionless. He held the shoe which he called *The Shoe*. Each step he took reminded him of the time he saw Jane cross the Creek. He now understood why Jane was so angry when he crossed it on his own. And why his mother and grandmother would not allow him to go to school. Approaching the center of the bridge, he came to a halt.

He watched as a few leaves dropped into the water, and disappeared in the strong currents. They would never float back to the surface. All hopes were lost for them.

# RISHIKA MUNDADA; GRADE 7

## The Movie

Things started happening to me after I watched that movie. Strange things. I started seeing visions. Of murder scenes, not only from one movie, but from others I had watched, as well. I used to love murder mysteries and movies, but that was before it all changed, before I died...

Jessica and Rachel and I had planned to watch a movie after school, to mark the beginning of summer. There was no question about what movie we would watch, it was obvious we would watch a murder mystery. We decided to walk to Rachel's house, and her mom would drive us to the theaters.

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"Oh, the blue raspberry ICEE ran out..." Rachel shrugged, and with a slight frown put her cardboard cup under the cherry spout. We did the same, and got popcorn.

"I heard that this movie was soo scary that you might have to sleep with your light on for a month. Ashlynn, you'll be so scared," Jessica teased, in what she thought was a spooky tone.

"For you, maybe. For us, no," I said, and smiled to let her know I was joking. We made our way to the theater in silence, and got comfortable. I didn't know that this would be the last time I would ever be comfortable again.

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The visions started that night.

*I walk to the stage, mic in hand. I close my eyes and let the music envelope me. There is no audience, but I am happy to sing for him. Actually, I have no choice. I am dressed up, specially for this scene from my first movie, the one where I die. (In the movie, not in real life...) But this is just for fun, I remind myself.*

*"Brianna? Why are you stalling?" He asks.*

*I shrug, and begin to sing. It is the same song from the death scene. My voice is melodious, and I lose myself in the song. He is also humming along, eyes closed.*

*Now, my voice would become choked, as I would be strangled by the mic's cord, if this was following the movie.*

*I can't breathe. What is happening? I have to strain to speak. I try to gulp in air, but can't. I raise my fingers to my throat, and feel a thick wire, tightening around my neck. I try to pull it away. I can't. I hear him laughing cruelly. My vision is going black.*

*The cord, I think in panic.*

I woke up gasping. The dream had felt so real. Who was Brianna? I wondered. Even as I thought, the name rang a bell. There was a murder in the newspapers: minor movie star named Brianna Jones? Killed at the set of her first movie? I silently screamed in horror when the truth finally hit me. I realized that I just had a dream vision of how Brianna Jones had died.

*To be continued...*

# KIMBERLY HUANG & SREETAMA CHOWDHURY; GRADE 8

## The Newcomer's Guide to Joining a Fandom

Do you ever feel bored? Lost? Unfulfilled? Well, don't worry. With this short, easy, and written-in-five-minutes guide, your life will be filled with drama, action, humor, and, of course, the soul-crushing agony when your ship doesn't get together! Yes, you guessed it! It's a fandom! You might be thinking, "Gee, that sounds like fun! But how do I join one?" Well, here are the steps!

1. The fan doesn't pick the fandom; the fandom picks the fan. You'll know you've found the ONE when you find yourself unable to focus on your math test because your OTP (noun: acronym for One True Pairing is stuck in your head. Until then, watch and read everything available to you. (i.e. fanfiction.net, archiveofourown, etc.)
2. Integrate yourself. Make friends. Overanalyze. Read fanfiction. *Write* fanfiction. Die of feels. Be reincarnated. Rinse and repeat.
3. Find a ship. Which two people make you think "THEY'RE SO CUTE!?" Once you find a pairing, defend it till the day you die. Do your best to spread your ship (short for "worshipfulness"). Infect others. Pray each night that it sails. You'll want your ship to sail smoothly into the harbor of canon; prepare yourself, however, for stormy seas.

Repeat these steps, and you'll never be bored again! (As a side note, your grades might disintegrate, but it's worth it.)

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# ARTWORK

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ARIANNA YUAN; GRADE 8

Just a “Healthy” Snack



**CRYSTAL ZHU; GRADE 7**

The Raven





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