

# STAFF

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# CONTENT

## Writing

POWER DRILL // Varun Bhuta	3
A NEW CHAPTER OF LIFE // Sahana Kaza	5
UNTITLED // Ruxandra Ion	8
TALE OF ARINA AND CARINA // Emily Park	10
THE USR GIGANTIC// David Qi	12
REVIVAL // Maya Swaminathan	16
THE FLOOD // Avani Tibrewal	17
BIT// Anne Xu	18

## Artwork

UNTITLED // Avani Tibrewal	21
A NEW SHADE // Mahati Ramakrishnan	22
UNTITLED // Michelle Jiang	23

## Power Drill

I looked up at the old, almost broken-down movie cinema. “Well, this is it,” I said. My friend Noah looked at me.

“Yup,” he said. I entered through the entrance and thought again why we were here. This was the only movie theater showing *Power Drill*, which Noah and I had seen on TV as an advertisement, and we thought it was totally awesome. That’s how I found out about *Power Drill*.

I looked up at the person on the ticket counter. “Hello?” I asked. He didn’t respond. He was playing some kind of game on his phone, and I could hear the buzz from the earbud he was wearing. “Hello,” I said a little louder.

“Oh!” His head snapped up as if he had noticed us for the first time. “What do ya kids want?” His voice was like a zombie waking up from a graveyard – raspy and scratchy. “I said, what do you want?” he said again, a little bit more harshly.

“Um, could we get two tickets for *Power Drill*?” I asked.

“Sorry kids, we’re all sold out,” he said, returning to his phone the moment he finished the sentence.

“Oh well,” Noah said. “I guess we can’t watch the movie.” But I really wanted to watch that movie.

“We can sneak in through the exit,” I said. Noah gave me a look.

“No way,” he said. “We could get in trouble!” I didn’t care.

“So what? It doesn’t matter anyways. I mean, look at this place! What’s the worst they could do to us? Throw us out? That’s not even that bad!” I said to him.

“Well, I’m leaving. You could do whatever you want. I’m not getting in trouble.” Noah backed off, then ran away. “See ya later!” He called over his shoulder. I didn’t respond, because I was too tense to even speak.

I made my way out to the back, and I sneaked in the back door. I winced as it creaked and groaned. A few people looked at me, but no officers noticed me. *I did it!* I thought to myself. I took a seat as the film started. THIS FILM IS IN PERCEPTIVISION, it said. *Cool*, I thought, even though I didn’t know exactly what that meant. I looked around. Weird headsets were dropping from the top of the movie theater. Suddenly, one dropped in front of me. A tiny screen popped up in front of me. CHOOSE YOUR AVATAR, it said. Then it showed a bunch of different people on the screen. A brave guy, an evil guy, a scared guy, a shy guy, and more. I picked the brave guy, since he looked like the superhero of the movie. YOUR AVATAR IS GALACTUS THE SUPERHERO. PLEASE PUT YOUR HEADSET ON YOUR HEAD, it said. I followed the directions and put the headset on my head. Later on, in the movie, I figured out what “perceptivision” was. When the Galactus stepped out into the rain, I felt my face getting wet. When he fell and scraped his knee, my knee started hurting badly. Though when he put on the band-aid, I felt a little bit better. The only downside was he kept getting more hurt throughout the movie, so the same thing happened to me.

Except when the bad guy, Fixxula, caught Galactus, I started to get worried. *Maybe I should have gone with Noah*, I thought. I tried to take off the headset, but even the slightest pull sent a huge wave of pain through my head. I looked around and saw people fiddling with different knobs on their headsets. I guess they could control the amount of pain they experienced. I tried to do that myself, but a little warning popped up on my screen saying, CANNOT CONTROL PAIN-O-

METER WITHOUT A TICKET. PLEASE ENTER TICKET NUMBER ON SCREEN. I tried to control it anyways, but the knob wouldn't budge. I didn't have a ticket number *or* a ticket since I sneaked in through the back. I was really starting to freak out now. *I really should have gone with Noah*, I thought. Then, Fixxula caught Galactus and cornered him in an alley. He trapped him and pulled out a drill. "This is gonna hurt a lot," Fixxula said. His voice reminded me of the teenage guy at the ticket counter's voice, but ten times worse. Then he turned on the drill.

I was thinking about Noah, and how he made the smart choice and went away. I can't believe I was so stupid. I should have gone with him when I first saw the building itself. *Noah is probably buying candy at the Quikmart*, I thought. The Quikmart was our favorite place to buy candy. *I wish I was eating a nice caramel ChocoSquirt*, I thought. And that was the last thought that I had.

# SAHANA KAZA; GRADE 7

## A New Chapter of Life

“This is Steaming8 News reporting live from Johnstown, Pennsylvania. There has been a major flood in Johnstown. The water level is 35-40 ft high. Many homes and cars have been destroyed, and we have evidence that 8 people have already died! This is the deadliest flash flood to hit in a century! If you are in Johnstown EVACUATE NOW! Yes, EVACUATE NOW BEFORE YOU AND YOUR PROPERTY ARE DESTROYED!” The room got dark, very dark. It was like an old medieval cave. Mama’s eyes were watery, and Janet was sobbing.

“[Sniff, Sniff] What happened, Dad?” Janet asked.

Dad took a deep breath. “Janet, we lost power and we may not get it back for a while.”

Janet looked at Dad in confusion.

“No lights, No TV, no heater,” Dad said.

Yes, we had lost power and were about to be destroyed by a major flood! I was trembling. My hands were cold, and my eyes were watery. I feel the tears coming out. I had never witnessed such an incident before. I had only seen it on TV. I guess this is what it feels like, to die in a natural disaster.

*NO! We are not going to die!* I thought.

“We have no time to spare! We better hurry up and evacuate!” Mama and Dad stood there sobbing and gave Janet and me a big hug. I didn’t know why they were doing that, but it felt good to be in Mama’s warm hands in the harsh cold.

“Come on! Come on! Let’s get our stuff and evacuate! That’s what the news reporter said! Let’s go, Dad!”

Dad just stood there, staring at me. He probably wasn’t in the mood to yell at me or lecture me with “Oh, use your logic” and “Come on, really?” I just stood there and watched Mama and Janet giggle. Dad joined them too.

“Nana Nana Na!” Janet teased. She smiled with her pearly white teeth. When we were younger and even now, both of us would never get along. We would always fight over something or the other like who gets that pink toy or who gets to taste that cupcake first. But this time, I just felt that we couldn’t... not anymore. I shot a wobbly smile at her. Janet was my little sister who was four years old.

“Oh, Jennifer,” Mother sighed. “We can’t go anywhere because there’s... water... everywhere!”

I sighed, but before I could exhale, I felt a strong gust of wind almost lift our house. I heard rushing water, this time, only louder and stronger. The water was like a monster coming to devour us all. I heard my neighbors crying and yelling.

I closed my eyes. This would be my last time in this house. All the memories we had. All the fun.... I stopped. I felt Papa’s rushed tap on my shoulder. I slowly opened my eyes. I saw a horrible sight! The water had opened our door and it was in our house!

“Mama, Papa, where are you? Come back!” I yelled.

“Oh, I’ll b...” I couldn’t hear her anymore.

“Mama? Mama?” I said. But no response.

All I heard was the sound of rushing water. I froze. My heart was beating as loudly as it could. I couldn’t take it anymore. The water was going to get me anyway! Why should I... try to escape it! My loved ones are gone now, so why should I be the only one alive! I don’t want to live anymore!

“COME GET ME, WATER!” I yelled. “COME AND DEVOUR ME AS YOU DID TO MY LOVED ONES!” I was thinking about Mama, Dad, and Janet. I thought about Mama, staring at me with old lady wisdom in her eyes, her beautiful smile, and curly black hair past her shoulders.

“No, Jennifer, don’t give up like that! You were born to fight! Don’t let the water take you away!” (Mama would say this to me) *Yes, that’s right*, I thought. Why should I just give up? I will fight against this flood!

I left the house and was surprised at how much water there was. I started swimming through the water. I kept thinking about my family. I won’t see them ever again! Maybe I should’ve listened to Mama and Dad and done my chores and not have fought with Janet. The next thing I knew, I was submerged in water. The water level was probably too high for me to swim in. I couldn’t breathe. My thoughts revolved around Mama, Dad, and Janet. *Maybe I might see them...* I thought. Maybe... Maybe. Maybe I will start over and listen to Mama and Dad and not fight with Janet anymore. Maybe... Maybe. I was struggling to breathe. I felt that every breath was my last one. Suddenly, my eyes closed.

When I opened my eyes, I looked around. I was in a completely different place because there was no flood; in fact, the sun was shining through the window. I tried to breathe, but it was very difficult. My nose was clogged and there were so many pipes going through my mouth. I tried to move my hands but couldn’t. I didn’t feel like myself, the strong and energetic girl. When I looked up, I saw the nurse come to me. I tried to talk to her. Fortunately, I was able to talk clearly.

“Where am I? Is my family okay?” I asked.

“Do not worry my dear.” the nurse replied, “You are doing well and shall be sent home in a week or two. And, your family, well, luckily, your sister is safe. The flood didn’t harm her. But your parents, uh.” The nurse looked like she was trying to hide something.

I was scared. What had happened to Mama and Dad? I was scared about myself, too. Our family couldn’t pay the hospital bills. We weren’t very rich.

It hurt, but I managed to sit up from the hospital bed. The nurse assisted me.

“What happened to Mama and Dad?” I asked.

“The water carried your Mama and Dad away.” the nurse replied. “That’s all I know. They’re missing. The search crew hasn’t found them. We don’t know if they are dead or alive.”

Tears burst out of my eyes. I wondered who would take me to and from school, help me with my homework, and make warm porridge for me. I realized that Mama and Dad wouldn’t be there for me. No more fun times with them. I couldn’t live without Mama and Dad. They’ve always been there for me. After the first tear burst out, the others came like a stream. I sat there and cried and cried. The nurse’s eyes were watery, too. She felt sorry and handed me a glass of water. It made me feel better and prompted me to ask her more questions.

“What happened to me?” I asked.

“The search crew found you underwater and immediately admitted you here. They said that you were there for a long time. Not sure how long. You were one of the last few people they rescued. They said that you could’ve died. You barely survived.”

“OMG!” I actually survived. I kind of felt a bit sad because if I was dead, I could have been in heaven with Mama and Dad and we would have all our fun memories.

“At first, the local doctors couldn’t treat you, so we had to ask doctors from Russia to come over. They were able to help you and make you healthy again.”

It is now five years after the flood. Janet and I now live with our grandma. We never really found out what happened to our parents. The first few months were very rough. Janet and I were depressed, and I didn’t go to school that year. Janet was younger, so she wasn’t as depressed as I was. My grandma was very sad, too. After the first year, I went back to school and got school counseling. I was told that changes happen and that this is a new chapter of life. I must accept the

past and move on. I could have died in the flood, but why didn't I? Because God wanted *me* to survive and begin a new chapter of life. This *is* a new beginning; the first page of a new book. I will never forget what was in my old book, but this is my new book, my new chapter of life.

**Author's Note**

The flood of Johnstown, Pennsylvania really did happen. It occurred on May 31, 1889 and it was the deadliest flash flood in history. The flood was caused by the failure of the South Fork Dam. Most of this story didn't really happen, but many children did lose their parents and began a new chapter of life.

## Untitled

### PROLOGUE

Hi! My name is Alaina. I am 7 years old, and in 2nd grade. I adore writing. The genre isn't really of importance to me. I like writing whatever comes to my mind. Whether that's fiction, mystery or fantasy.

However, with books, the genre is what matters MOST! My absolute favorite book is Harry Potter. Sometimes, I like to think I'm Hermione. (But, don't tell that to ANYONE!) But it is WAY different in movies. Most movies make the characters so different, sometimes even I can't recognize them. For example, in the movies, Ron's hair is messier than Harry's. Which, if you read the books, you would know that Harry had the messiest hair in Hogwarts history! Ok, maybe second messiest. James Potter also had messy hair. Ok, maybe it isn't really Harry's fault. After all, he did just inherit it from his father.

Anyways, I love talking with my friends during recess. For me, school is almost always fun. You never know what new thing you're going to learn that day! Maybe you will even learn TWO new things. Or maybe THREE! How can people hate that?!?!)

As much as I love school, there are three days I hate. Report card days. I don't know what I'm so scared of. My grades are fine. Better than fine actually. They're good!!! But I know it will come eventually. I can't just keep running and hiding from it. Oh! Gotta go read. 2 more hours and I will be done with my 4 hours per day!

### Chapter 1

#### Those times are over...

~5 years later~

Hanna comes running. She shouts for Alaina, but Alaina is too busy.

*Ugh. She must not hear me. Wait a second!!! Alaina is breaking our pact! Why would she do this to me? To us? To our friendship?* thought Hanna.

If you are wondering what pact they had made, let us go back 6 months and three days ago. The very first day of school. Well, the very first day of 6th grade. By a very lucky fortune, Alaina was put into the same homeroom as Hanna. (They had met at Orientation, a few days before) They had all the same interests. Harry Potter, reading, writing, school, going to Stanford, and many more. That is the reason they become such close friends. Best friends. Or, so thought Hanna. Alaina CLEARLY thought different. Anyways, back to the pact. They had been warned by not so intimidating 8th graders (who am I kidding?! They were VERY intimidating... In how good they were in academics) to stay away from the popular group. There was this girl there. Classic popular girl, not very smart girl. Blond hair, dark brown eyes, very big mouth, very small brain. She just had to talk. And, she did. She asked the stupidest question anyone had ever asked. "But... what if you - I mean - what if I am the popular one?" The tone in her voice irritated Hanna as much as it did Alaina. Her name was a classic Mean Girls. It was Clarissa. From the moment both Hanna and Alaina saw her, they had a bad gut feeling. And, spoiler alert! It turned out to be true.

After Orientation, they went for pizza. They had sworn over Albus Dumbledore's dead body that they would never participate in the "popular group" or be part of it or anything resembling it. I mean, they were already the first to enlist in the Harry Potter club. Oh wait! Sorry! That's because they created it. No one so far had joined, but they liked it that way. Their own magical secret. Back to Hanna and Alaina!

Alaina turned to see Hanna a shade of red she never wanted to see again.

"Were you calling me?" Alaina said, irritated. Just like Clarissa spoke. Thought Hanna

"Oh, sorry to interrupt your little selfie party. I was just wondering if you got your test scores back. You know we always have the same score sooooo....." Hanna said angrily.

"Oh yea. I already looked at it. I got an amazing grade!" Alaina said with a fake smile.

"Uhhh, Alaina. Back to business. Sweetie why don't you go show your test score to your little Asian squad back there where the NERDS are! Understood?" Clarissa giggled.

"It's fine. I can handle her for a few more minutes." Alaina sighed.

"Sooo, you got 101%? Just like usual?" Hanna asked excitedly.

"Oh yeah. No. Those times are over. I'm so happy though! I barely passed! I got 61.5%!!!" Alaina flashed her white smile and turned back to talking about "the right selfie angle" with those girls.

Hanna turned that smile upside down and walked away. She couldn't believe her BEST FRIEND would just ditch her for the popular group. A tear slid down her cheek as she walked home. Hanna and Alaina would usually walk together since they were neighbors. However, from that day onward, Hanna wanted nothing to do with Alaina.

### Tale of Arina and Carina

“Another flood has destroyed a city,” the news reporter said. “It’s been the seventh flood since last month. The scientists are saying...” Another flood. These days, when you turn on the news, all they talk about is the flood and how the flood is destroying city by city. Why are there even floods? So many people are dying from them. Floods houses, then villages, then cities. Next will be the country, I’m guessing.

“Dad, why are there floods? I know it is a natural disaster, but it’s just so awful,” I brought up the topic in the evening.

“I know, kid. Floods are awful, but you can’t stop it. That’s just the way,” my Dad replied.

“I get it, dad. Do you know what causes floods?” I asked.

“I’m not a scientist, so I’m not sure what’s the correct answer, but I can tell you a story about it. Do you want to hear it?” my Dad suggested.

“Sure. I love your stories,” I said.

“Okay. Here we go,” my Dad said. Then he started.

A long time ago, there was a woman named Arina. She was a good person and an especially wonderful daughter. She loved her parents very much, so she helped them a lot. Everyone in the village praised Arina, which she deserves. However, there was one person who hated her very very much. It was her adopted sister, Carina. Carina joined the family when she was three. Back then, Carina didn’t know anything about adoption and genuinely thought her family was really her family. Carina and Arina got along very well because they were both three and liked to draw and paint. However, as time goes on, even though Carina did right and wonderful things, her parents always complimented Arina more and loved her more. Then when Carina became 15 years old, she realized she wasn’t their real daughter. It was a shock to both Carina and Arina. At that moment, Carina’s heart was broken and started to hate the family more than ever. Arina still treated Carina as her real sister, but Carina never let her in again and hated Arina, even more, when people praised her.

On a fine one day, Arina was delivering bread that she baked to her neighbors. When she was about to knock the 5th door that day, she heard the scream. It sounded familiar. Then she realized: it was her mother’s scream! Arina ran to her house as fast as she could. But it was too late. When she opened the door, her mother and father were both lying down and blood was everywhere. Arina checked their pulse, but there wasn’t any pulse to check. A lot of thoughts and emotions came to her. She didn’t know where to begin or what to do.

“Carina, are you here?” yelled Arina. That was the first thing she did. There was no answer. Arina went to the second floor to check Carina’s room because Carina was always home. Carina hated the village and going outside. When Arina looked inside the room, it was completely empty. Everything was gone. *What? Where is she? No, no, it can’t be... it couldn’t be!* Arina thought. She had bad feelings about this. *Carina couldn’t possibly kill them, could she? They raised her for more than 20 years. No, no...* Tears rolled down her face. Then she cried out loud for hours and hours, day after day. Her tears began to flood her house.

A few days later, Arina finally stopped crying. The bodies have been removed 2 days ago, and now she was the only one in the new one-room house. There was no sign of Carina. Arina was still in shock but promised herself to stop crying because it won’t fix anything. She decided to find

Carina so all this disaster could end. Arina searched her everywhere for days, weeks, and months, but there was nothing new. Arina was about to give up until one day, Arina was walking and saw someone who looked like Carina wearing a hood, so she followed her. That person went inside one of the shacks. Arina peaked through the window. That person was Carina. Arina pushed the door and went inside. When Carina saw Arina, she was and shocked.

“Carina, is that you?” Arina asked.

“Arina, what are you doing here? How did you find me?” Carina asked.

“That doesn’t matter. You killed our parents. How could you?” Arina said impatiently, tears were rolling down on her cheeks slowly.

“Arina, you should know the reason. You already know. You knew how miserable my life was. Everyone was complimenting you, but no one looked at me. You always just pretended to be nice to me so you will look great. I couldn’t let that keep happening anymore. I wanted to take away something precious from you, and that was your parents,” Carina said coldly.

“I never pretended. It was all real and genuine. I know you must’ve been feeling bad, but you can’t just murder my parents like that. How am I supposed to live now?” Arina cried out.

“Stop. It wasn’t easy for me. Just never see me again, or I’m gonna do the same thing to you that I did it to our, no, your parents,” Carina said, and she left away. Arina hopelessly stood there looking Carina go away. She lost all the senses and collapsed. It all came back. She cried and cried. She didn’t eat anything or even sleep. She cried and cried for months and the village flooded. Arina kept crying until she died.

“That’s the end of the story. Arina is the reason that the city is getting a flood. If you want to stop the flood, you should probably tell Ariana to stop crying,” my dad said with a chuckle.

“Dad, so this is why there’s a flood? Because Arina cried too much? That doesn’t make sense. By the way, it’s not funny,” I said.

“Arina cried because her parents died, and after that, she wanted others to know how much that hurts. So now, she is taking others’ lives by drowning them. I know it’s a little bit scary, but that’s how it is,” dad said.

“I realized now. If Carina was more loved, none of this would have happened. It’s so unfortunate,” I said.

“That’s right. Sadly, we can’t do anything about the flood, but we sure can help people. Maybe, we can donate money to the city that was flooded,” Dad suggested.

“That’s a great idea, Dad. Let’s do it!” I said.

## The USR Gigantic

*I knew that this ship was cursed. Why did I go on this ship?* Jack thought as he squinted, trying to keep out the salty water in his eyes as he swam to his father on the other side of the deck. *Why did I even go on this ship? It had to be cursed, with a name like Gigantic, right? Today is Friday the thirteenth, and unlucky stuff always happens then. Why would they choose a captain named Viernes Vennari Friday Divendres, that's four Fridays in one name! Besides, four is unlucky in Chinese, as it sounds like death.*

Thirteen days ago, on May first of 2029, shortly after the end of World War III, the USR Gigantic went out from the United States to Australia. Jack and his family were fortunate enough to survive the war and earn enough money to go to Australia. Jack and his cheerful little sister were leaving behind their remaining friends, as the others had died due to the war.

The huge USR Gigantic cruise ship was counted as one of the seven wonders of the modern world at that time. Because of the bombs, the Gigantic had sensors that sensed bombs and other obstacles in the sea, and it also had a special device to keep water out. Also, because it was originally supposed to be a warship, it was also bulletproof, bombproof, and made from iron and steel. In fact, important parts, like the engine, had a diamond protection on it. Inside the cruise ship, there was a lot of luxuries, ranging from a pool and library, to comfortable and big enough ship cabins for everybody.

As the sun slowly got eaten by the sea, the water got more and more choppy. The passengers, however, did not mind, as they were enjoying a huge, delicious meal. This was their second to last day on the ship.

On this day, Jack sat, eating his dinner with his family. *I must not let my family see how sad I am over moving to Australia* he thought as he gloomily chewed his food. Suddenly, the captain's booming voice interrupted his thoughts, announcing that a little bit of water had leaked into the ship, and that everybody had to evacuate. He and his family immediately ran down to their cabin and packed their belongings. In just under ten minutes, they were back onto the ship's deck, each with a backpack that had a little of their clothes, jackets, some canned spam and half a pack of bread, a first aid kit, and a pocketknife. They also had their smartphones, wallets, money, passport, driver's license, etc.

Just when they were about to board the lifeboats, Jack suddenly remembered that he had forgotten his passport. *I'm doomed* Jack thought in a panic *If I don't have my passport, I'm not going to be allowed by Australia to go in. That makes sense, because who knows what kind of person might be on the boat, right? I heard stories that people who don't have passports would be sent to court and most likely sent back on the cargo ship to who-knows-where.* He knew that if he told his parents, he would have been made to stop, so he quietly slipped away from line. He ran to his cabin, which was on the deck floor, and rummaged through his abandoned belongings. It was nowhere to be seen! Soon, he was tossing everything around, frantically trying to find it. Giving up, he thought that he should quickly return to his family and ask his mother if she had it. *She probably did* Jack tried to reassure himself with this thought.

As he opened the cabin door, ready to go out, he was splashed with a small wave of water. In front of him was water that was around half feet deep, which was rapidly going up. Near the lifeboats, he saw his father and the captain, frantically looking around for him. He went into the cabin, where the furniture was floating out because of the water that had flowed in after the door opened, and quickly grabbed his backpack. Then, he swam around in the water on the deck to his father, making sure his backpack did not get wet. Even though he tasted the salty water in his mouth and felt it in his eyes as he was swimming, he did not give up. He swam across the twenty-meter

long deck, while maneuvering all the moving tables and chairs to the lifeboat launching platform where his father and the Captain was. There, he was finally able to stand up.

“Quick! Get into the boat! Your mother and sister have already gone down,” shouted the captain as he waded in huge wellington boots from the deck to the captain’s cabin, which was facing the lifeboat platform.

“Now, come to think of it, was my passport with mother? I’m really just not sure,” Jack thought as he saw the captain’s retreating figure striding in the water.

His father instantly said, “Don’t worry, son. Your passport is with your mother. I know your thinking about how strict Australia is about immigrants and how we must have passports.” almost as if he had been able to read Jack’s mind.

Jack, as he looked around the slowly sinking ship and the deep, icy ink black ocean that was almost engulfing the platform railings, thought, “Who’s going to control the lifeboat that we are going to be saving our lives with?” when he realized that all the other crew members had gone.

Jack and his father went into the huge orange lifeboat that was next to them on the platform. There was still plenty of lifeboats on the ship. As Jack was looking around him, the door of the lifeboat opened, and Captain Divendres stepped into the boat. In his hands, he carried his wellington boots that looked like two massive eels, and he placed them on the rack near the door, before pulling his captain’s hat out from a particularly overstuffed pocket on his blue jacket that was covered with pockets inside and outside. Then, while sweeping his wet hair away from his forehead, he put on his captain’s hat and strode down the corridor, looking extremely serious and angry.

Now, he was almost fifty, and this was his last time as a captain on a ship. Everybody who had boarded a ship that he captained, from tugboats to cruise ships to battleships in the war to cargo ships, were sad to see him go. With his twinkling blue eyes and huge smile, he made others think that everything was okay and that you were safe with him. He convinced you that you could trust him and that whatever deal he was going to say, you would think it was reasonable and immediately agree with him. It was almost like he was able to hypnotize people.

Jack watched as the captain locked the door with a loud click and strode to the control cabin. Somehow, he looked older and wiser in the dim light than when Jack and his family had met him on the first day. Now, his eyes looked more serious, his mouth was set in a straight, firm line, and his face was expressionless and pale. In fact, he made others feel that you just had to agree with him, and if you didn’t, then you would be doomed. In his arm, he held an unconscious boy who looked almost as young as Jack.

“Captain Divendres discovered that stowaway hiding in the empty water barrel near this lifeboat. He is the captain’s grandchild,” Jack’s father whispered to him.

The captain laid his grandson gently onto the two seats next to him. The boy looked around Jack’s height, and he also had wavy blonde hair. His eyes were closed, and there was a bandage on one of his legs that looked like it had been bleeding badly. The captain went into the cabin, and Jack watched as the lifeboat slowly separated from the ship. Now, the lifeboat went onto the flooded deck and the captain steered the lifeboat from the flooded deck into the ocean, as the water had already gone to the top of the railing. As the lifeboat bobbed up and down in the ocean, Jack saw the once lively ship’s funnels give a last feeble puff of smoke, then all the lights went out, and the right funnel broke in half, shooting coal onto the top of the boat. Then, they heard an ear-splitting crack as the hull broke into two parts.

Jack started reading a comic book in the lifeboat to calm himself. Soon, he was asleep on his father’s shoulder. After around an hour, Jack awoke. He saw the boy stirring and shouting in pain. Jack jabbed at his sleeping dad, who immediately awoke, and saw that the boy’s wound had started to bleed very fast.

Jack’s father immediately zipped open his backpack and pulled out his first aid kit.

The boy opened his sparkling blue eyes, which according to Captain Divendres, was usually very mischievous, now filled with fear. He trembled and asked, "Where am I? Who are you?"

Jack told him, "Hi, my name is Jack Napoleo, and we are on one of the lifeboats of the USR Gigantic, and that the USR Gigantic had sunk."

The boy forced his mouth into a polite smile while saying, "Hello Jack, my name is Nemo Divendres. Do you know where my grandfather is?"

Nemo, they learned, was very mischievous, and always created pranks. He was also very smart and was way above the grade level, and so all his pranks were very good and used a lot of thinking. He liked to study a lot, and he spent all his time in a dark corner of the mansion's library, flipping through books. The only fear he had was floods, and he was practically trembling so hard that Captain Divendres heard him.

Just then, Captain Divendres shouted, "You okay there, Nemo?" Nemo sighed with relief, knowing his grandfather was nearby.

"So, according to my father, you are a stowaway. Can you please tell me your story?" Jack asked with curiosity as his father pretended to look bored, with his face behind his newspaper, but he was obviously curious, too.

"Well, before the trip, I told my grandfather that I would like to go with him to Australia, but my grandpa firmly said no. He said that he knew that something bad was going to happen on this ride, and he seemed so sure. That's why he was so mad. He's usually very nice and jolly, though I don't know why he's so angry now, but not angry when I make pranks..."

Nemo told the story of his whole life, starting from when he was born in a rich family in Boston, with his mother being a successful real estate agent and his father being addicted to gambling. He added, "mother was the money earner in the family, because she inherited grandpa's gift of twinkling her eyes to convince people." At the age of six, his parents were divorced, and his mother was granted custody of him. He told them that he had always wanted to sail on a ship, and when he heard that his grandpa was going to take a ship to Australia, he asked if he could go. After all, he didn't want to live with his mother's aunt, who was very cruel, and his mother had already moved to Australia. So, when his grandpa said no, he hid in the potato barrel that was going to be loaded to the captain's cabin.

"Hey, can you keep a secret? I'm going to tell you why Grandpa and Mum convince people so easily," whispered Nemo, before looking back at the captain's door to make sure that the captain wasn't watching him. "You see, they can hypnotize people, and they're called the hypnotizers. My grandpa says that my father's family line is all bad cause they descended from the evil type of hypnotizers, the Black Hats. He and my mum are both White Hats. But I'm different, cause I'm a Magician."

While saying that, Nemo rolled up his damp sleeves and opened his right hand that had been in a fist. Then, he muttered, "Convocar Aga".

Suddenly, a jet of water burst from his hand and shot Jack on the head. Soon, Jack's whole body was wet and already, a small pool of water had formed at his shoes

"Sorry, I am so sorry, Jack. Here, I'll clean it up." with that being said, he recoiled his hand back into a fist and shouted "Novis Wassier!" Immediately, a green mist went from Nemo's hand to Jack's head. When the mist died down, Jack's clothes and body were very dry.

After the demonstration, Nemo wanted to know whether Jack was a hypnotizer. He told Jack, "My grandpa told me how to see in your eyes if you can hypnotize, and it seems that you can. See, your eyes must be able to twinkle, and the white part is supposed to move around from the left side at the bottom to the top on the right side, then back. That's how your eye's white dot is like. Then, to hypnotize, you have to force the white dot to go in the opposite direction, and then you

make eye contact with the person you want to hypnotize, and you say what you want them to do in your mind. ”

Nemo whispered something to Jack very quietly, and Jack burst into a silent fit of laughter.

When Jack had calmed down, Jack stared at his dad, and tried his hardest to make the white dot in his yellow pupil go from top to bottom left to right. He saw his dad’s pupil color change from the normal yellow color to an alien purple color. When this had happened, he thought in his head, get an axe, then start flying in the air for a minute. After that, do ten sets of five splits in five seconds.

Immediately, his father took an axe out from the ceiling as if he had known it was there all along, then he folded his arms to his sides like a bird and jumped up and started flapping his arms. He flew in the air for a minute, then he fell to the ground with a crash, landing in a split position and started doing one split in a second. Jack was totally terrified now. He spluttered to Nemo, “how do I stop this?” before fainting.

Nemo panicked, after all, he didn’t want his grandfather seeing this, so he made eye contact to Jack’s father and muttered *Arretez Detener*. Jack’s father immediately returned to normal and saw Jack. He dumped his whole water bottle on Jack, and Jack slowly started to open his eyes.

His father asked curiously, “What happened? The last thing I remember was that you were looking at me, Jack.”

Jack half cried half laughed and said, “I hypnotized you to fly for a minute in the air, then do infinite splits. And you actually did! You were so flexible too.”

Nemo added, “Sorry sir, I just wanted to see if Jack was a hypnotizer or not. I returned you to normal right as soon as Jack fainted.”

Jack, in the meantime, was looking out the window, and his face was beet red from embarrassment. He suddenly saw a ship in the far distance that looked like it was taking up one of their lifeboats. Jack shouted, “I think a ship is coming to take us! OH! That’s the USR Mega!”

A few minutes later, Captain Divendres sent a radio message to a nearby sister ship, the USR Mega, telling them that they were near the ship. The crew lowered a ladder as they got beside it. One by one, the passengers and captain climbed onto the ship. Jack was immediately tackled to the ground by a bear hug from his sister as soon as he had climbed onto the ship by the ladder.

**TO BE CONTINUED**

## MAYA SWAMINATHAN; GRADE 6

### Revival

These lands are filled with war.  
People fighting for no cause;  
people dying for no reason.  
Prejudice runs rampant through these streets,  
killing the innocent  
and sparing the guilty.  
Then,  
It rains.  
Flooding the land.  
Cleansing the land.  
Not thoroughly,  
but enough—  
Enough to revive the innocent,  
whose tears mix with the rain as they embrace their loved ones.  
Enough to slaughter the guilty,  
who futilely beg on their knees for forgiveness.  
Enough to drive prejudice and hatred away, far away;  
where they lick their wounds  
and swear they will return someday.  
But the people have united.  
No longer shall despondency  
rule society.  
No longer shall the guilty  
be allowed to walk free.  
For when the flood comes to cleanse the land,  
the world begins anew.

## AVANI TIBREWAL; GRADE 6

### The Flood

I stare out the window,  
Clueless  
Suddenly I hear a loud noise  
Oh, My Goodness!

Is that water?  
I think but instead, I see  
My world torn up in seconds

I rush for cover  
But hear a shout  
When will this be over?  
Why can't we have a drought?

Questions popping into my head  
I just wish I was still in bed  
Dreaming while I was sleeping  
But now I guess I'm weeping

Water opens up the door  
I try to move  
But, I feel sore.  
Should I care or have a doubt,  
I look up and try to shout

I see a rush of blue  
I feel a coldness too,  
But will it change or add more  
I think I just heard a roar

## BIT

It was a chilly night for people to be out in Shanghai, China. But crowds of people continued to bustle through the streets, laughing and talking, as they walked to their own destinations. I could hear traffic from all directions as I watched from my tiny window in the crowded bus that I was forced to take this late in the night. I sighed, thinking of all the evenings that I spent in my classroom, furiously studying for the next exam and all those nights in which I took this bus, including today. Exasperation filled me, clouding my brain as I watched the flashing lights of the skyscrapers beyond my window. Absorbed in the sight, I watched taxi sped up and crossed the red light, causing our bus to lurch forward as our driver stomped on the brake.

“Where are you going?”

I looked sideways as I stumbled forward, my hands flying out to grasp the handles to regain my balance once again. It was an elder who spoke above the mumbles of complaints and curses in the bus. She was seated, so she didn't lose her balance as the bus jerked.

“Haidian.”

“What high school are you going to?” She asked, her face showing no sign of disgust to my neighborhood. After all, Haidian was the poorest section of Shanghai, famous for the home of beggars on the street. Ones who couldn't afford the rent for any house in the entire city rented homes from homeowners that wished to sell their old and broken houses. I had always look at the tall skyscrapers in other sections of Shanghai, but I knew that I should never wish for what I would never receive.

“I'm going to try for BIT,” I told her, then looked toward the window.

BIT was an incredibly prestigious high school famous for its low acceptance rate. Every February, the so called “intelligent” kids with the highest test scores from all over China travel here to take the test. Four-fifths of them return to their home with nothing but a rejection letter. Graduates from this school went to world famous colleges, mostly traveling to the US to study abroad.

A look of disbelief entered her face. “Do you think you have what it takes to make it?” A tired sigh escaped my lips, coursing through my body, shaking my chest and shoulders as I thought about the heavy question. Our family was one of the families that were barely able to keep clothes on our backs. With my younger sister sick and the amount of medical fee that we owe to the hospital, I hardly ever see my mother anymore. Working as a hospital nurse, custodian, and a cook at a nearby restaurant, the money she earns is hardly enough just to buy enough food to put on the table, not to mention the medical fee and the amount of effort needed to take care of my sister.

“I have to. It's the only way to go to a better college, then earn more money to take care of my mother and sister,” I mumbled, convincing myself through and through.

“Spend more time with your family. It may be the last time you see them. Sometimes you realize that studying so hard isn't as important as being with the people around you.” She smiled painfully as she looked at me with sad eyes. “I learned that the hard way.”

“We have arrived at Haidian. The next stop is Chaoyang.” The speaker on the bus suddenly blared, cutting through the silence between us.

“Thank you,” I said to the elder before I stepped from the bus into the cold, windy, air. The last thing I saw of her was her sad and teary smile. I stood there, wrapping my jacket closer to my

body as I felt the temperature drop. Long after the bus drove away, her words still were ringing in my head repeatedly. *“Spend more time with your family, it may be the last time you see them.”*

The door creaked as I slowly pushed it open and silently stood in our house. It had a small bedroom in which my sister spent most of her time lying in bed and reading some of my old textbooks. The paint from the walls were peeled, the shower was constantly broken, but the tiny kitchen in the corner made the house look just a bit nicer. I thought back to the days when my dad was alive. The times when our entire family would bustle in the kitchen, making the best food despite our meek ingredients. But those times didn't exist anymore, and my dad was lost to cancer. I headed to the kitchen, every step making the floor groan.

After I made my rice porridge, I slowly walked to my sister's room, the elder's words still ringing in my head.

I gently pushed open the door to see my sister lying on the bed, reading. At the sound of the door, she looked up, and a wave of emotions appeared on her face at my appearance. Her eyes widened slightly from shock, then a smile on her pale cheeks from happiness. “I brought you dinner,” I held up the porridge.

“Thanks.”

I slowly closed the door as she pulled the sheets up. It was getting late, and we had talked well into the evening about the new book she had started. I sighed as I settled into the chair and pulled out my notebook and a pen and started writing. If I wanted to be selected, I should at least study the high school curriculum, right?

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“Are you ready?” My mom asked as I stood in front of the testing building. There were parents and students closing in from all directions, exchanging hugs and words right before the exam.

“It'll be okay, just be sure to take care of yourself and Sister.” I wrapped my scarf tighter around my neck.

“Don't even worry about us,” she said, bending down to pick up a scrap of paper that just fell from my backpack. In that moment, I suddenly noticed the gray hairs that seemed to cover up all the black hair on her head, making me realize just how much effort she put in trying to raise us up and be healthy children.

“I love you, Mom.” I threw my arms around her and hugged her until the bell rang, signaling us to go up and take our seats.

There were so many words unsaid, but we all knew it deep down in our hearts what they were.

“Thank you.” I ran back upstairs holding the letter that decided my fate.

“Come on, tell us, tell us!” My sister shouted as I gently took the letter out of the envelope.

“You told me there was a scholarship, right?” My mom took the letter from me and started reading.

I read over my mom's shoulders: “Congratulations, you have passed the exam required to be in the school of BIT, the first day of school starts on September 1st...” My voice broke off, and I stared at my mom and sister in shock. It took me a minute to register the fact that I...

“Made it!” I shouted into the room, laughing at my sister's still shocked faces.

“I made it, I made it, I made it!” I grabbed my sister and hugged her as hard as I could, thinking that all the studying, all the tests, all the effort I made was worth it, worth it. I looked toward my mom, but instead of happiness, I saw a mixture of sadness, sorrow, and distress.

“It’s....” All the color suddenly drained from her face. “There’s no scholarship. We can’t afford it, Crystal. We just can’t.”

“No, no, no,” I snatched the letter into my trembling hands as I read, a sudden force pulling my insides, as if I was being squished by two trucks. “The tuition is thirty thousand a year. Please have the money ready by the first day of school. No scholarship is provided.”

“No!” I screamed into the empty air and started sobbing, running into the living room, falling, falling, into the floor, into the never-ending darkness.

“I’m sorry.” My mom’s face came into my line of sight, deep lines on her forehead. “I thought that there would be a scholarship. But we just can’t. You know it, Crystal.” And I did. No matter how hard she worked, how late she came home, she only earned a tiny amount of money that barely kept us alive with a house to live in. I thought back to the white hairs, the words of the old lady, and I knew. There was simply no hope regarding the tuition.

I sank into the chair and picked up the phone. “Hello, this is Crystal Liu. I’m here to cancel my registration to BIT.”

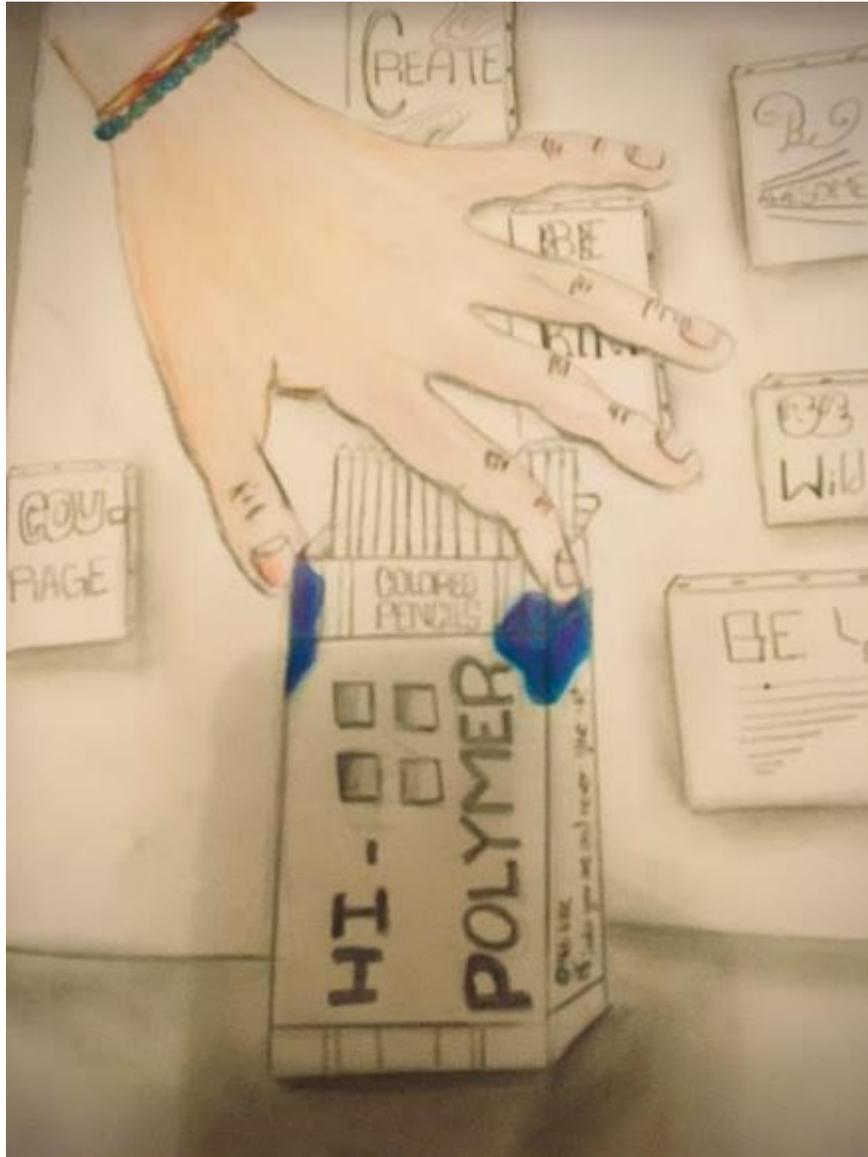
**AVANI TIBREWAL; GRADE 6**

**Untitled**



# MAHATI RAMAKRISHNAN; GRADE 7

## A New Shade



MICHELLE JIANG; GRADE 8

Untitled

