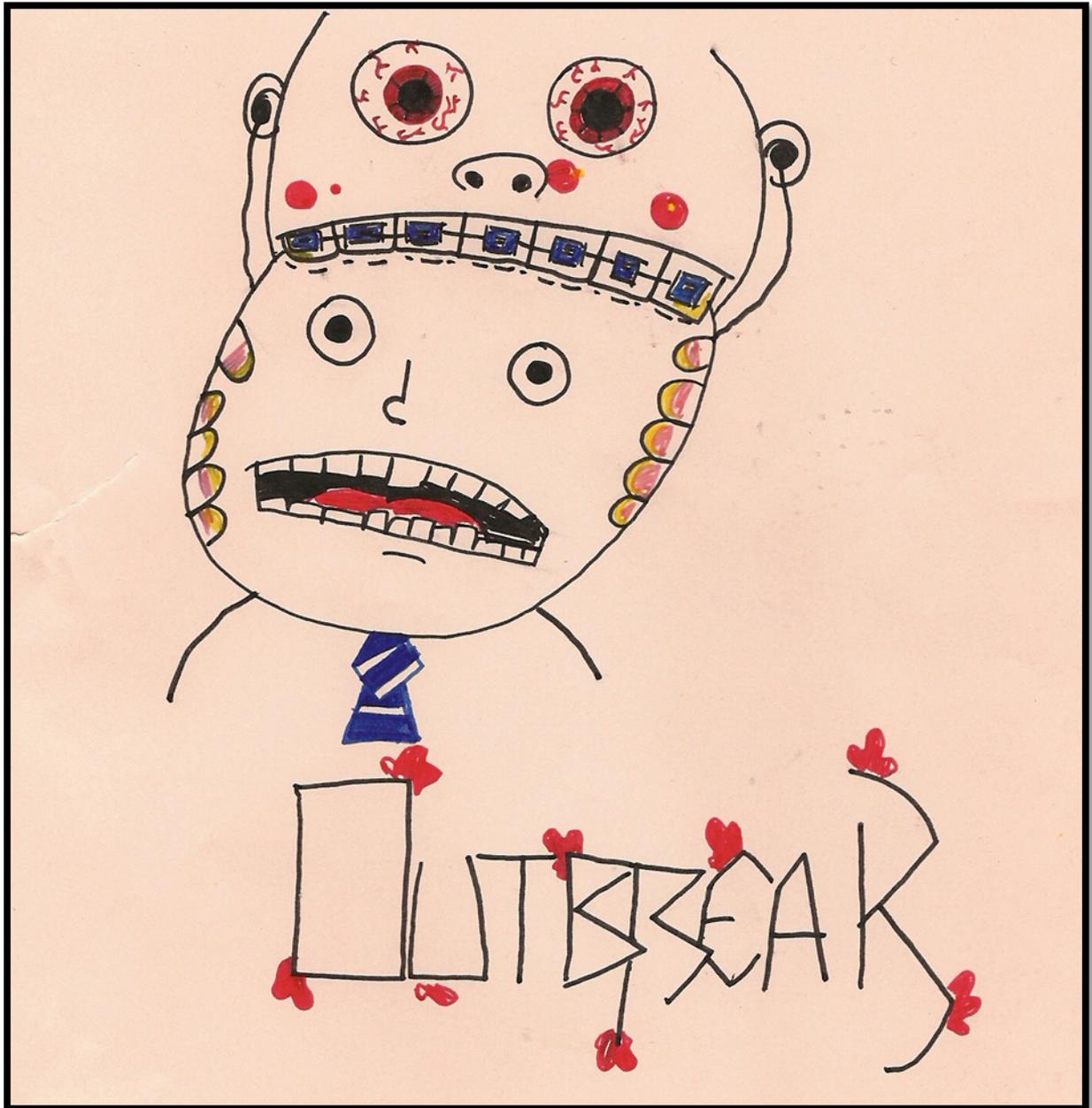


# OUTBREAK!



**A collection of creative writing by S3 Pupils from  
Inveralmond Community High School**

**Introduction by Mary Paulson-Ellis**



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**A collection of creative writing**

INTRODUCTION BY MARY PAULSON-ELLIS

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## INTRODUCTION

It was October 2010. A cold, drizzling day. I drove my car out from the city of Edinburgh heading for the metropolis of Livingston, a gathering of houses, dual carriageways and roundabouts somewhere towards the West. My heart was beating fast, my breathing shallow. I navigated Ladywell Road, turned right, then left, went the wrong way. Then I came upon it. My destination. Inveralmond Community High.

I had come to the school to take part in an experiment – a project called Writers in Schools. I had come to find some willing guinea pigs on whom I could test my creative writing teaching skills. I had come for Mr Stephenson's S3 English class.

I got out of my car and walked towards the school reception. Pupils were lined up on the football pitches. Someone had set off the fire alarm. Had they heard that I was coming? I began to sweat under my coat. What if all my creative writing ideas were rubbish? What if everything I said was boring?

I reminded myself over and over that I wasn't alone. First there were those nice people from the Scottish Book Trust who set-up and funded the programme. They had promised me it would all be OK. Then there was the writer and teaching artist who would be with me in the classroom, my mentor Linda Cracknell. She had said it would be OK too. Then, of course, there was the English teacher himself, Mr Stephenson. He had said it would be OK as well, but teachers are paid to say that aren't they. What about the pupils? What would they think?

Red, brown, black, blonde, school ties and skirts and strange haircuts. I squeezed my way past a river of students, along several corridors, up a few flights of stairs. Inside the classroom Linda and Michael helped me rearrange the furniture, push tables back against the walls, gather chairs into a rough kind of circle. I got out notebooks and pens. I laid out my lesson plan and my bottle of water. The bell went. Then the fun began.

For three weeks in October 2010 Mr Stephenson's S3 English class became writers. Together with the outstanding help and advice of Linda and Michael, they and I created something new out of nothing but our imaginations and our pens. We explored character, plot and setting. We wrote three sentences in three minutes. We made ideas boards and read stories set in schools. We put character within setting, setting within plot, plot within character. We asked, 'What happens next?' We took some words out and added other ones in. Nobody seemed to be bored. We even held a book festival, with readings, interviews, posters, visiting authors and some very good food.

Then at the end of it all my eager guinea pigs, now individual authors each with their own distinctive voice and style, proved themselves capable of becoming published writers. The result is *Outbreak!* – an eclectic, spirited and witty collection of short stories, extracts, flash fiction and drama all set in Inveralmond Community High.

In here you will find friends lost and vanished. Rooms that can take a person to another world. You will find zombies and shape-shifters and people who ought by rights to be dead.

You will find things that may or may not actually be real. Secret portals and helicopter gunships. You may even find blood.

Above all else you will find enterprise and commitment to the idea that anyone can have a go at creative writing and make something of it. Which is exactly what the nineteen writers represented here have achieved. They have not worried about the rules or the right way to do something. They have not thought, I can't. Instead they have taken a deep breath and thought, I can. The resulting pieces of original fiction should make their authors very, very proud. Which was certainly how I felt when, after three intensive weeks, Writers in Schools finally came to an end.

It was another cold, drizzling day in October 2010 when I drove away from Inveralmond Community High for the last time. I was no longer sweating, but under my coat my heart was still beating fast. Because as I navigated Ladywell Road, the houses, the dual carriageways and the roundabouts, as I set off back towards the East, I couldn't help thinking. Who knew that Livingston (and Mr Stephenson's S3 English class) would turn out to be quite so wonderful and quite so weird.

**Mary Paulson-Ellis**  
**Edinburgh**  
**2011**

## Zomberalmond

Grant Dearie

*from the lost diary of \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*, found December 21<sup>st</sup> 2012 (Z-Day)*

- 7:00 am        Woke up straight away today. Feeling much better after kicking the flu. The news says everyone is sick. Lucky me.
- 8:00 am        Got ready for school. Had a glass of orange juice. For some reason I felt like I didn't want any water. Looked outside my window and I saw this man get bitten by a crazy toddler with these really sharp teeth. The man just kept coughing and coughing. Weird.
- 9:00 am        The most fights I've ever seen in a single school day, and it's only been half an hour. Everyone is biting one another.
- 10:00 am       In English, Mr Stephenson was coughing up blood all over the place. He didn't speak, just grunted and got sick in a bin. His teeth didn't look normal.
- 10:30 am       The door in Mr Stephenson's room has been locked. He's trying to bite people. He even ripped out a part of his head and ate it. Now a part of his brain is exposed.
- 11:00 am       I had to do it. Mr Stephenson had to go. All I did was grab the safety scissors and lodge them right between the eyes.
- 12:00 pm       Mr Delargy just started munching on his leg. I saw someone slice a teacher's head off with a flexible ruler.
- 1:00 pm        The walls are covered in blood. Everywhere I look, the infected are tearing chunks out of corpses. I've had to act. Stole dozens of stink bombs from the first years. Managed to find a handgun on the body of a lunchlady (who knew?). Used cutlery to hack my way through the Home Economics department. I'm in the lunch hall now. Prepared.
- 2:00 pm        Have found no survivors. Mr Hewson in science combined stink bombs and a Bunsen burner to sacrifice himself, taking hordes of them with him. I covered my ears. Then my nose.
- 2:30 pm        There are flames everywhere, organs and limbs strewn across the lunch hall. A spreading pool of blood. Going to make my way out.
- 3:00 pm        Fought my way to the front door. Trying to communicate with the army on the other side when I got bitten by one of the zombies. Pulled out the handgun and shot at his head: the bullet went into its eyeball and out the other side of its head.

3:29 pm      Finished bandaging up my wound just as the school bell rang loudly, right above my head. So much running and screaming.

A soldier looks at me and then walks away. Starting to feel hungry. No bullets left. I don't want to be a zombie. The one that bit me had a lighter. I grab it, bring out a stink bomb. Start running...

*Epilogue – from the report of Private Private*

It was the most heroic thing I've ever seen. He grabbed a lighter and a stink bomb and ran towards thousands of infected over by the boiler room. There was a huge explosion, incinerated the school and everyone – *everything* – in it.

For some reason, now, whenever I look at the other soldiers, I FEEL HUNGRY...

## **The Safe Place**

Rhowain Harvey

On her first day she's welcomed kindly. Everyone wants to know her name, where she has moved from, why. They ask about her Irish accent.

She tells them politely her name is Cheryl. Says she moved from Ireland because her Dad just got a new job in Edinburgh.

She doesn't mention the rest.

She finds the safe place while she's waiting to hand a slip into the school office. The door is unmarked and anybody else would have walked right past it. No-one would have any reason to go there. But something about it draws her in.

She knew something was different as soon as she walked in. All the worries, the memories and visions that were usually with her...they just went away.

In that place, it was as if her mother and sister had never died.

## **The Outbreak**

Dayle Collins

Silence – apart from my own footsteps. I walked down the corridor. Lights flickering, cables hanging from the roof and paper spread across the floor. I continued to shuffle forward when a cold feeling went shivering up my spine.

Something was wrong. My foot had something on it. A liquid. I turned on my torch...

It was blood.

There was a trail of dark, glistening footprints so I followed them. The footprints smeared and turned into smeared drag marks, leading me to a cleaning cupboard in a secluded part of the hall. I was imagining what could have been in there. Then I thought: why wonder when I could have a look?

My steps were miniscule as I approached the door. Blood leaked out from behind the door into the corridor. I made a move for the handle and began to tense. The door opened with a click.

I could not believe what was inside...

## Silver Leopard

Katie Anna Walsh

The leopard's golden fur glistened in the sunlight. She padded forwards, sniffing the air for the scent of prey. Then she froze as a rustling sound came from a bush. In seconds, she was in a well-practised hunting crouch. Paw-step by paw-step, she stalked nearer. She stopped and tightened her strong leg muscles; it took only a split second for the squirrel to scent her, but by then it was too late. The last thing it knew was a moment of pain as sharp teeth gave a killing bite. The leopard stood back to look at her kill. The salty and metallic taste of blood ran into her mouth as she stepped forward again and bit down hard. Quickly, she stripped meat off the squirrel, knowing that soon she would have to leave this peaceful paradise. Just as she finished licking the blood from her fur, she felt her strength sapped. She sighed and lay down. Then she closed her eyes and left her trance.

"Good," Mr Dillon greeted Silver as she woke. Silver sighed and sat up looking around. She was in Mr Dillon's office, lying on a silky green blanket. She shakily got to her feet and paced the room as she had been instructed to do when she left her dream world.

"So," Mr Dillon asked, "How did the change go?"

Silver stopped pacing and went to sit in a chair pulled up against a desk.

"The same as usual," she replied. Mr Dillon just nodded and smiled to himself. Silver heard the classroom bell go and got up to leave.

"I'll see you again on Saturday," Mr Dillon told her as she turned to leave. Silver nodded and the door snapped shut.

Outside in the corridor, Silver breathed out. She hated having to tell Mr Dillon what was going on in her dreams.

"Hey!" She heard a familiar voice up ahead and saw her best friend Jade: she had green eyes and long brown hair which was always perfect. She was small for her age and quiet around strangers, which was how she got her nick-name – Mouse.

"Hey Mouse," Silver greeted her friend as she pushed through the crowd to fall into step beside Silver.

"How was your class with Mr Dillon?" Mouse asked as they weaved through the crowded corridors.

"OK, though he was nosy as ever," Silver said, rolling her eyes. "I wish he would mind his own business." Mouse nodded understandingly but said nothing. They didn't speak again until they reached the corridor which led off into the box room. They stood outside, leaning

on the door until there was no-one else in sight. Then, as quick as lightning, they had the door open and dashed inside.

The darkness surrounded Silver and Mouse. Then the light flashed on. A boy with blonde hair was standing in front of them. He held out his hand; Silver and Mouse copied him. Silver gently slapped the back of his hand and he slapped hers and Mouse's in return.

"Hey guys," the boy said as they walked over to a group of blackest. Silver picked up the bundle and threw them to the floor. She reached into her pocket and pulled out a small silver key. She handed it to the boy and stood back. She smiled as he opened a small trunk which she had unearthed. Then he started to open the lock of a small suitcase. Silver knew he could have picked those locks in seconds. Jake was her other best friend. He was two years younger than her but he didn't look it. As well as lock picking, he was an expert explorer and full of random facts about bats.

"Come on!" Mouse called Silver forward before disappearing into the depths of the cupboard. This was not a normal room. It was called the box room and it looked like a box room, but it was more than what it seemed. It was the best den in the whole world. It seemed to extend back endlessly and was littered with countless cardboard boxes, as if someone had taken its name far too seriously. As Silver headed further into the cupboard, the number of boxes decreased until the walls were fully visible. Finally, the end of the room opened out into a few extra metres of secret space. This was where the Club Always meetings came to order.

"The meeting has come to order." Silver stood on top of a wooden crate as she addressed the members. "To begin, we have reports of homework being doubled in the past four weeks. I think this is a plan for weekends to be ruined," Silver stated. Down below her, Mouse and Jake nodded in agreement. "Are there any more reports?" Silver asked.

"I have reports of mouse traps being laid near the kitchens – I think Minnie must have been spotted," Jake added, standing up. Mouse nodded and wrote down his claim in a large note pad, before flicking back through the pages.

"She has been seen near there four times in the past week," Mouse added as she studied the page she had been looking for.

Silver nodded before speaking. "We will deactivate them tonight," she promised. "Any more reports?" When everyone shook their heads, she announced that the meeting was over and stepped down from the crate.

A few hours later, she returned to the same spot with Jake and Mouse on her heels. They were out of breath as they flopped down on to the bean bags which lay around the room. They had just mounted a successful deactivation of the mouse traps. Or at least that was what Mouse wrote in the log book. Strangely, after the mission, they were silent. Silver reached into her pocket and gently withdrew the reason. Curled up in the palm of her hand was a small ball of fur. Jake picked it up and placed it in an upturned crate. Mouse put the log book away and moved closer to the small furry body. She could just see the tiny nose and whiskers. It was a young mouse.

“That’s her.” Mouse confirmed their suspicions. The mouse was Minnie, and she had been caught in a trap.

\*\*\*

Silver groaned as she Angelina change yet again. She was just about fed up of trying. Mr Dillon knew that she couldn’t, and if he was just going to keep nagging her then she didn’t see any point in showing up to class.

“Don’t let it get to you,” Jake whispered into her ear. They were leaning against the wall of the gym with the rest of the 3<sup>rd</sup> years.

“Well, I have to agree with Silver,” Mouse said. “I *hate* special skills class. I even hate the name.”

“Silver!” Mr Dillon called her over. Silver sighed to her friends and slowly walked over to where the teacher and Angelina were standing. Angelina snorted as Silver approached. “Your turn.” Mr Dillon stepped back. “Remember, you have to find the feeling which makes you change...” He was interrupted by Angelina yawning as she changed once again. Silver clenched her teeth. She couldn’t do it! She had tried more times than she wanted to admit. She heard laughter from behind as Angelina strutted around, showing off her ease.

“There’s no point in trying. You’re never going to be able to change,” Angelina began, “You can’t even hold a trance for ten seconds!” She circled Silver as she taunted her. Mr Dillon seemed not to notice as Angelina’s words continued to sting her. Then Silver did something she very rarely did. After years of taunting, Angelina had finally made her lose her temper. Then, just as she was aiming a kick at Angelina, something amazing happened.

She felt fur.

Then she was shrinking. Her legs were getting shorter. Powerful muscles and long claws began to develop. *Paws!* Silver leaped back in shock. She was no longer herself. She kept backing away until she reached the wall.

“Silver!” She heard Mouse’s stunned voice. It sounded much louder than normal. Mouse was also huge; Silver only came up to her knees.

“You did it, you changed!” Jake’s voice sounded above her. Silver froze. Had she changed? She turned her head and looked back at herself over her shoulder blades. Fur. She had fur, golden fur with black spots like ribbons. *Claws*, a voice told her. *For attacking*, the voice continued. Silver turned towards Angelina, whose sleek cat fur was trembling as she locked eyes with a leopard. Silver smiled as best a leopard could and slowly stalked towards her. In seconds, Angelina was racing across the room. Then Silver’s leopard instinct told her to chase. She tore after the retreating cat and easily caught up with her, only to get a face full of claws. She growled and aimed an unsheathed claw at the trembling cat.

“ENOUGH!” a voice roared at them. Silver turned and saw Mr Dillon stomping towards them. The smell of anger flooded Silver’s highly sensitive leopard nose. *Oops*, she thought as he reached them.

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*The walkway.* There was no other name for this place. It was Silver’s secret place. Not even her best friends knew where it was. It was perfect, high in the air above all of the troubles of the world below. It was never cold, never hot. To get there you had to sneak through the projection room on to the balcony. Then you crawled into the ventilation shaft and took the left at the joint. You ended up at where it collapsed. If you jumped down you were standing on the 2 metre wide walkway, far out of reach of anyone else. Even the bird shape shifters had never been here.

*Shape shifters.* Silver sat considering the word. She was a shape shifter now. After 3 years of thinking she didn’t belong, she knew that she did. She had been transferred to shape shifting school after she had been cornered by some bullies. She had changed. They had run away screaming and she had panicked. The local newspaper got wind of it and the video tape from the security camera had disappeared. Then someone had knocked on the orphanage door and she was told to pack up her stuff; she was going to a new school.

When she had arrived at the school she had been sent straight to the headmaster’s office and she was told why the school was here and what she would learn. A school for shape shifters, not very believable Silvered thought. That was until she met Mouse and Jake. They had been her right from the minute she had been put in Mouse’s dormitory. When she had finally saw them shape shift Silver had stared, open mouthed, until she had regained the power of speech. Mouse, was of course, a mouse. She could understand what they were saying even when she was still a human and had befriended all of the school’s escaped classroom pets. Jake was a fruit bat and could see brilliantly in the dark. Silver, though, had never changed since she was caught on camera. To change you had to summon a feeling which you had felt the first time you became your animal. To help, you were trained to enter into a trance in which you could be your animal and feel what they felt. The longer you held the trance, the easier it would be to change.

Silver sat on the edge of the walkway and looked down at the stage below. She could see Jake who was wearing his favourite bright red beanie, and Mouse with her aqua blue hair band in her pale blue dress. They were doing the final dress rehearsal for the school’s play, Cinderella. Jake was an extra and Mouse was a fairy god mother. Silver had offered to come and watch but they had refused. They knew what it was like to change for the first time. But now as Silver watched them she wished she was there. She wanted to feel the excitement and hear the nervous voices. Something normal was what she wanted. Now she fitted in at school she was different. Now she was a shape shifter. Sometimes she wished she wasn’t and that she could be normal.

Because she was now a stranger, she could never fit in anywhere else. With that she changed. She leaped up the ventilation shaft which she ran along, flowing on to the balcony.

She tore through the projection room and pushed open the door with her muzzle. She became herself again before she entered the theatre. She sat down in the front row and her friends came over to sit beside her. The rest of the cast were too busy acting out the ball to notice the new arrival to their spectators and the new arrival paid no attention to the actors.

She was with her friends and she knew that as long as she was with them she could never be alone. No matter what she was.

## **The Room**

Robyn Clamp

She pulled open the heavy black door with no handles. Inside, the walls and the hard floor were white. The room was no bigger than a cupboard. As she looked around the room wondering why it was hidden and in such an unusual place, she noticed a small gold key lying in the corner of the room.

She walked over and picked up the key and gently laid it in her hands. Suddenly the door slammed shut behind her. She tried to push the door open but it wouldn't budge and there was no handle to open it. While she was trying to reassure herself that she was going to be okay, she heard someone enter the studio outside the door. She pressed her ear against the door to listen better and the footsteps seemed to be walking towards the door. Her heart was pounding as the person got closer and closer until the footsteps stopped right outside the door.

A few seconds later there was a quiet knock on the door...

## **The Invasion of Nathans**

Lee Moffat

I followed him at break. He moved fast with meaningful strides. We reached the door and Nathan burst into a sprint. I heard a door slamming as he walked into his caravan. It seemed strange, him going to a caravan in the middle of a school day. Then everything turned green for a split second. Nathan then climbed out the caravan door and walked back towards the school. This happened for the next three or four days. I thought nothing of it but then after the weekend, everything went downhill.

There were hundreds, maybe even thousands, of them. They destroyed everything in their sight. Every person was taken to the assembly hall of the school. Anyone who tried to run got blasted and turned to dust. The army of Nathans had taken over the school and nobody knew what they had in store for us.

## **The Secret Door**

Kim Brown

That day I was feeling adventurous. I was lurking about the corridors to see if I could find anything interesting to do. I started walking towards the drama studio, looking over my shoulder in case someone was following me. I made my way into the drama studio. As soon as I stepped into the dark room I could see a glimpse of light in the corner. I walked over towards it, unsure what it was.

As I got to the door I discovered it was locked and there was a 'DO NOT ENTER' sign in big bold writing on the front.

I turned around to see if there was anyone behind me before I tried to open the door. I was startled to see a smartly dressed figure standing in front of me. To my surprise it was my brother. He told me to stand aside. He knocked on the door three times. It suddenly opened. It was a very small corridor. Too small for us to walk through so we had to crawl through it.

It was suddenly getting smaller at every step we took. We then had to slither across the path. The floor was dusty. I placed my hand down to steady myself as I lost my balance. I felt something cold and sharp. It was a key. I put it in my pocket and carried on slithering across the cold floor. My brother suddenly stopped. The black heavy door slammed shut behind us. We were trapped in the tiny space. Then...my brother disappeared!

## Conspiracy Theory

Drey Stevenson

The janitor was locking up and checking for hangers-on at the school when he noticed a yellowish, eerie light coming from the school's Drama Studio. Curious, the janitor entered. There he saw it: a panel of light, slightly ragged around the edges but blindingly intense at its heart. He approached the light cautiously.

"It's amazing!" he exclaimed. Moving still closer, he picked up an unusual sulphuric smell which choked his throat and nostrils like an invisible hand.

Then it pounced.

A deformed creature with the body of a tiger and the snarling head of a large dog. Huge, tungsten-like claws lacerated the flesh of the janitor's stomach. Masses of identical creatures were already seething through the panel of light to join their unearthly brother, all of them drooling with hunger. The janitor never even had time to scream as the demons descended on him and ripped him apart.

From the doorway, a boy – Lock – watched in horror. His school, Inveralmond, was being overrun by demons! He did what anybody would do: he called the police. But instead of a ringing tone, he heard a series of whirrs and clicks, followed by an authoritative voice saying, "We know, and a squad is on the way." There was the click of the receiver being put down and the conversation was over.

For now, Lock was on his own.

The only way to escape the marauding demons was to climb into the ventilation shaft. He inched into the darkness of the chrome tunnels, finding it harder and harder to breathe. Suddenly, though, there was a bone-shaking bang followed by the ear-piercing shrieks of dying demons. He slid back down from the shaft to be met with a scene of carnage.

Demon body parts lay, smoking, everywhere. The SAS had arrived in style, leaving no wounded alive. The clean-up was quick and efficient, but their job was not yet finished. Crouching in the shadows, Lock listened to the commandos talk and learned that they knew something he didn't. Livingston was encased in a rapidly expanding bubble of magic. If the demons were able to escape the confines of the school, the world would be doomed. As long as the portal to the demonic realm remained open, more of the hellspawn could cross over. The only way to seal it was with an explosion of enormous power. Two SAS men were already dragging into place a large silver case marked with a radioactive symbol.

Lock stepped out of the shadows but before he could speak, a large, vicious-looking demon bounded round the corner into the dining hall, its great jaws snapping. Immediately, it was ripped apart by a hail of gunfire. As the smoke cleared, though, it became clear the beast had created a diversion – the corridor leading to the Drama Studio – and the portal – was now

blocked by larger, more powerful demons. One of the SAS men scouted along another corridor, which Lock knew ran to the PE department. When the shouted “All Clear” came, the rest of the soldiers followed. Lock raced behind.

Two hours later...

Flashes of torchlight and gunfire...another man down...dead demons everywhere. The two remaining SAS men and Lock had been forced to barricade themselves in the cafe above the Drama Studio. Suddenly, a demon launched itself over the barricade towards Lock, somehow avoiding the hail of bullets. Lock felt something rise up inside him. At first he thought it was fear, or even vomit, but then a bolt of lightning shot from his fingers. The demon was incinerated, leaving Lock – and the soldiers – staring in wonder.

Lock used his newfound power to explode the barricade and start blasting a path downstairs towards the Drama Studio. The two SAS men grunted as they dragged the nuke behind them. Lock blasted the stronger demons and left the weaker ones to the SAS’ guns. They reached the doors to the Drama Studio and Lock blasted them open. The magical energy in the room was staggering, but Lock found he was able to tap into its power, using it to raise the nuke and propel it towards the portal. With a precise touch of magical force, he armed the device just before it was sucked through the portal and into the demonic universe.

The remaining demons seemed to sense something of the danger, and began to rush back towards the Portal, ignoring the three humans to launch themselves at the portal, unaware of their imminent doom. Even if they did get back though, their world was about to be destroyed.

Racing outside, Lock and the two soldiers climbed aboard a waiting UH-16 Black Hawk military helicopter armed with two 6 x 16 calibre mini-guns. At a shout from one of the troops, the pilot nodded and the chopper ascended swiftly into the dark skies.

The bomb exploded.

The shockwave hit the chopper hard, sending it into an uncontrollable tail-spin.

Bone-shattering impact.

The grind of metal on metal.

Screaming – heat – darkness.

Lock’s ears rang as he looked around. The pilot and the SAS men were dead. Then he looked up to see planes – countless planes – dumping their deadly cargo...

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General Marsden had watched from one of the planes in the fleet, helpless as the chopper went down. He gritted his teeth and gave the order to release the incendiaries. In perfect sequence, the fifty planes began to unload the fire bombs. “Terrible gas explosion at school,”

the papers would say. The truth couldn't get out. The evidence of these...creatures...could not be leaked and the fire would burn away their remains. The mission would be successful. He just hoped that, if any of the SAS survived, they were long gone. Nothing was going to survive the hell they were unleashing.

There was a thud, and the plane shook and whined. Turbulence, thought the general.

But then he heard the crunch, and the dripping.

He turned and saw the pilot decapitated.

He felt the breathing on the back of his neck,

He heard the rasping whisper: "*itt'ssssss nnooottttt ooovvveerrrrrrrrrr...*"

## Screams

Olivia Huber

I was in a dark room, somewhere in school, but I couldn't be sure where exactly. I started walking. It seemed like I was walking forever. Then suddenly, I felt something cold and smooth beneath my feet. It felt like a mirror. I continued walking until I felt something round, like a button. I pressed it but very quickly wished I hadn't.

Suddenly I heard noises - screechy noises like long pointed nails scratching down a blackboard. The kind of noise that makes you feel terrible and your ears hurt like crazy. It was the kind of noise which gets inside your head and won't leave. There were also screaming noises - terrible, pain-filled screams of a kind that you would never forget. They sounded like the screams you would hear in a horror movie. I felt scared. I was wishing it all to be a dream but I knew it wasn't.

I ran around trying to find a way out but could not see a way. Then out of nowhere, a door opened. Not knowing if it was safe or not, I took a chance and went through.

Once I was through I realised that I was in the drama studio. The bell went so I ran home crying. I told my mum when I got in but she didn't believe me. Thankfully though, she did comfort me which calmed me down some.

When I went to bed I fell asleep quite quickly but I kept dreaming about what had happened earlier that day. It was making me restless and scared. Then, in the middle of the night, I woke up and went downstairs to watch the TV. As I watched, something strange happened. The screen went dark and then the room light switched off! I curled up into the sofa and wished it wasn't happening.

Then the screaming started again...

## **Late Night in School**

Ross Thomson

It was 10pm and I had just finished a kick boxing club. I wanted to ask my coach if I could go to a tournament but he was nowhere to be found. I considered whether to risk looking for him alone or to leave safely with my friends who had already secured a place in the tournament. I decided to go looking for him. I was desperate to take part and knew the only way forward was to find the coach.

I walked in the direction I had last seen the coach go. I felt sure I would find him soon enough. I walked along all the school corridors, dark and cold, wondering where on earth he could be. I heard a noise up ahead. It sounded like footsteps. It had to be the coach; there was no one else around. Why would anyone else be in a school after dark? I ran towards the sound. As I rounded the corner there was no sign of anyone and the corridors were silent again.

## **Night Walk**

Ryan McCartney

Middle of the night, he called it. Didn't see the problem with that. Dangerous he said. Felt like telling him otherwise, but I couldn't...not after what I had seen.

I enjoy taking late night walks with my friends but that night, seeing the most horrible things I could have imagined, wasn't what I was used to. We decided to take a detour through the woods which turned out to be a bad idea. On the way through we heard noises, almost like someone or something was chasing us. All the time it was getting closer and closer. Curiosity made us walk towards the noise, and then it suddenly went quiet. We looked around and then I saw it, hanging down from the trees like a broken puppet...

## **Freddy**

Craig Forrest

I walked down the corridor and saw the new boy, Freddy. He looked totally alone, but I noticed everyone was ignoring him. I kept on walking too but guilt made me turn round to speak to him. He wasn't there. He had disappeared!

The next day everyone was talking about the death of a boy called Ryan. They said it had happened in school, during the day, when everyone was about and it had been Freddy who had killed him.

I walked along the corridor where they said Ryan had been murdered and noticed the locker that he had owned had a massive dent in it. I looked inside and scratched onto the back of the locker were the words *Do you realise yet?*

I wondered what it all meant. I met some of my friends and they asked me where I had been last night. I said I had been with them all night. They said they hadn't seen me at all. I was confused. Had I been sleep walking? I walked back along the corridor to my English class to get my jotter. As I passed a mirror I saw Freddy staring at me! The mirror steamed up and left a message saying *not long now*. Until what, I thought?

When I returned to my English class the next again day, Mr Stephenson, my teacher, was dead! Even though these murders were happening, the school still remained open. I wondered what on earth was going on. Everyone was acting normal, like nothing had happened. I walked along the corridor, past the same locker and found it open again with a different message scrawled on the inside. It said '*can't you see?*' Then it hit me. I hadn't been able to remember anything from the night of Ryan's death or the afternoon of Mr Stephenson's. Then it all came flooding back. I remember feeling so angry and seeing blood and holding the speaker in Mr Stephenson's room and the dent in the locker. The screams and why no one was taking to Freddy. Freddy didn't exist. It hit me...I was Freddy!

## **The Room**

Sam Young

As I was walking past the room that no one ever gave a second glance at, I saw him enter it. No one who ever went in that room ever came back out alive (or at least not fully intact). As I anxiously waited to see if he will reappear, the minutes turned into hours. Finally, after 3 hours he emerged. He hadn't been touched. I couldn't believe it - what had gone on in there?

I thought about it the whole day. I was really curious. I told my friends about it but they didn't seem to believe me. They said I must have imagined it.

I never understood why The Room wasn't blocked off or the school shut down. It was simply forbidden to enter it. I was walking past it later that day when all of a sudden I felt myself being pulled inside!

As I fought to stay out, I shouted to my friends for help. They grabbed me but it was no use. We were all pulled in to the room and the door slammed shut behind us. We were trapped! The floor and walls started to disappear and we were floating. We could have hung there for a second or an eternity. Everything seemed strange in that darkness which held us. Suddenly the room's features reappeared and we went crashing to the ground, objects around us smashing down. The door swung open and we flew out. It was dark and gloomy in the usually bright corridors. No one was around, not even the janitors or cleaners.

The last of the lights went out. Jake fell. We shouted to him but he didn't respond. He had vanished into thin air! "Where did he go?" I screamed. I thought everyone else had disappeared too. I decided I had to get out. Luckily there was an emergency box with a torch in it. I used this to guide me down the stairs but unfortunately I tripped. There was a huge shadow hovering over me and eerie whisper all around. I recognised the voice: it was John, the guy who I had seen leaving the room earlier. I immediately got up and ran as fast as I could towards the bathroom. I got inside and climbed up the cubicle walls into the roof. I thought I had lost him, and then he came running through the door after me.

It was really warm up in the roof. I could feel myself drifting off to sleep. I fought the tiredness as hard as I could but I couldn't stay awake. I fell asleep. When I woke up I was safely in my own bed. It was 7.30 the next morning and my mum was waking me up as normal. I went to school and met up with my friends. They all had EXACTLY the same story to tell as I did! We all made plans to enter the room again after school tomorrow.

We were walking past the room later that day, thinking about what would happen this time if we entered it again. There was something strange about the room. It seemed normal, like any other classroom. What had happened? Had John somehow deactivated the transporter? I walked into the bathroom later during 5<sup>th</sup> period. It was dark and gloomy again. It reminded me of the night before. I guessed that the transporter had been moved from the room into the

bathroom. I quickly got out my phone and phoned the school office. I faked the voices of my friends' parents and got them all out of school as quickly as I could. We met up outside and I told them about the transporter having moved. We grabbed our stuff, entered the bathroom and travelled through to the next dimension.

We found ourselves in the school and again no one was around. It had the same dark, gloomy light, just like you see in horror movies but there was a fog rising and getting thicker by the minute. It was also getting colder. The bottle of juice I was carrying froze in my hand. We ran to the boiler room to try and turn the heating up.

We got there and managed to turn the heating up. Thankfully the school started to warm up. Max found a map of the school and held it up for a look. Suddenly it started changing colour and burst into flames. Max burned himself and dropped the map. I poured the water from my bottle on his hands to cool them down. We started walking around the school, taking our time and watching our flanks for anyone or anything that might be following us. I was starting to feel weird. I was getting light headed and then I passed out.

Once again I woke up safely in my bed at home. I rushed to school to see what my friends had to say about the night before. They weren't there. I worried about them all day so after school I went to each of their houses. Each of their parents told me that they had all disappeared 3 weeks ago! I have no idea what happened that day or how long I must have unconscious for. All I know was that I had to figure it out on my own because there was no way I could tell the police. They just wouldn't believe me.

## **Night Time Wander**

Alana Jamieson

It was eerily dark. Small lights were showing our shadows sneaking up on us as though they were ready to pounce. Aiesha was scared but kept a reassuring smile on her face. I couldn't be so brave. I was scared and I couldn't help showing it.

As we shifted through the fog of silence, I stayed uncomfortably close to the damp, mouldy wall, stopping only once or twice as an obstacle blocked our path. You see, we weren't in a dark alleyway or a dense forest; we were in the never opened store cupboard under the English stairs. We got to what seemed like a staircase covered in sticky oil. We made our way down, slipping and almost toppling over. There was evidence of someone or something like old wrappers and storage boxes. We got to another door which was slightly opened with a light glancing through the slit. It wouldn't open fully but there was enough space to squeeze through. Aiesha and I glanced at each other questioningly then we opened the door.

Aiesha slipped through first. I took a deep breath and followed her. I don't know if there was something mysterious in the room that made me faint when I got through or whether it was that Aiesha was lying on the floor, dead to the world!

## **Alone In School**

Ryan Thomson

It was 4pm and I had just finished my detention with Mr Blue. I had missed the bus and had no other way to get home. I lived an hour and a half away on foot and my mum and dad would be home from work around 8pm. I could make it home before them. They would never know I'd had detention!

I walked over to the right hand gym and glanced through the small glass window in the middle door. The gym had always been restricted; only the janitor was allowed access. I looked to the far end of the wall but it was too dark to make anything out. I heard some footsteps coming from the corridor behind me. I lay down under a table in the corner of the corridor. I heard him getting closer and closer until he stopped right beside the table and gazed around the room.

## **Do Not Enter**

Rachel King

I was walking towards the stereo in the drama studio with my grey cottons and my black top on when I realised this deserted door behind the heavy, black curtains used to cover the mirrors. It had written in bold capitals: DO NOT ENTER. I took my chances and opened the door slowly. It was really heavy, and as it creaked open all I could see was blackness. I eagerly thought to myself that the door couldn't lead to nowhere, so I continued through. As I walked through the door way, the floor boards were creaking every time I went to take a step. Otherwise, I was surrounded by dust and silence. There was suddenly a blast of air that made my long, straight, blonde hair come over my face, almost as if there was someone running past me. I heard the door shut behind me.

I started to panic.

## The Spot

Aeisha Marr

“Bring, Bring!” the bell rang. Everyone sprinted to get to the dinner queue, everyone except me. I knew exactly where I was going...’ The Spot’. This was a space under the stairs that no one else knew about. It was very bright and sometimes the lights hurt your eyes.

I was met there by my three best pals; Zac, Aima and Robbieiee.

“I’ve got a tun of homework!” moaned Zac. This started a conversation. Whilst Zac, Aima and Robbieiee chatted, I could hear whispering and scratching. It wasn’t the first time to be honest that I had heard such things. It’s like the place is haunted. I shut my eyes just for a second and by the time I opened them again everyone had gone!

“Hello?” I said in a low voice. My head started spinning. “What’s happening?” I suddenly felt a cold hand touching my shoulder. I turned around but no one was there. Then the voice I had been hearing shouted “That way, through the door, SAVE US!”

I suddenly felt myself moving to towards the door. It slowly opened. “Oh my God!” I screamed. I couldn’t believe what I had just saw...it was the scariest thing I had ever seen in my life. It looked like a shadow; it was blurry, long and dark. I had to drop my eyes. I started looking around. “W-w-where am I?” I cried.

“The land of the dead” the shadow whispered. The place was pitch black with creatures like the one I had just met floating around. It looked like a graveyard. All of a sudden I felt a sharp pain in my stomach.

“Ahhh” I yelled. The next thing I knew I was in my bed staring at the morning sun shining into my eyes. “It must have been a dream” I laughed shakily. I got out of my bed and walked downstairs. I walked by my mirror and gasped at my reflection. “M-m-my belly!” I had blood all over my stomach. I must have been stabbed, I thought, then I collapsed on the floor. I could see that I was beginning to look like one of those creatures...blurry and dark. I couldn’t take it in. I managed to get up and crawl down stairs as quick as I could to find my mum, dad and sister. “Mum!” I screamed. She didn’t even look at me, didn’t flinch a bit. “Hello! Anyone?! I tried to touch my mum but my hand went right through her. “Oh my god, I’m dead!” I started sobbing. Something over on the wall caught my eye. It didn’t look right. All the pictures of me, my mum, dad and sister were different. All the photos of me were gone, as if I had never existed in the first place...

## **Demon in the Darkness**

Nicole Senior

During the day it was a busy room, full of school children messing about, teachers shouting and a place to hold the awful after school detentions. But when everyone went home, it was so much more than just a drama studio. When everyone went home, it came to life. You could sit for hours in the spirits of the shadows trying to find peace and creep yourself out at the same time. It was comforting yet frightening at the same time. I went there every day after school for about an hour. I would have stayed much longer if it was up to me, but the janitors locked up for the night at about half four and I wouldn't want to be stuck in the school for a whole night on my own. I got frustrated when I didn't get a whole hour because of the after school detentions, I would have to wait until the hall was completely empty until I was the only person there.

One day something very strange happened. I was walking my normal way to the drama studio and in front of me was a boy. He looked around about my age but it was always harder to tell from the back. I slowed my pace right down, eager not to let him see me. I watched him as he looked around to check if anyone was watching, then he pressed his ear against the door and put his fist up and gave three small taps on the door. He stood there with his ear pressed against the door for about 3 seconds and then he opened the door and slipped inside as quickly as possible. I sat there dazed for a couple of seconds. Someone knew about this place, someone came here as well as me! Questions flooded my head but I couldn't answer any of them.

The next day, I went down to the drama studio as usual. I tried to forget about the whole incident with the boy and the drama studio, maybe it was a one of thing, him coming down to the drama studio. I went down the familiar long corridor and there was no sign the boy. I entered the drama studio as usual and walked across to my corner. I was just about to sit down when suddenly I heard something breathe. I didn't jump; I was rooted to the spot with fear. I dared to look in the direction the breath came from and there again was the boy. His face was not how I would have imagined it after only viewing him from the back. It was beautiful but at the same time it looked like it had an evil twist to it.

He had piercings running up both ears and his hair looked so nice it looked fake. He looked up at me and patted the spot next to him as if hinting for me to sit down. I sat do with my back on the cold black all. we didn't say anything at all, it was as if we understood each other, that we both needed space to think, that we both knew what it was like not to feel safe anywhere else. I sat thinking for a while and then I heard a rough kind of voice.

"I'm Alec by the way" the boy said to me. He said it really quietly; his voice was very soft as well even though it was rough at the same time. He had a voice that I had never heard anything like before. He looked scarily beautiful unlike anyone I had ever seen. Almost like half angel, half devil. He seemed like someone who had a lot of feelings, someone who felt

something deep inside, someone fragile. I decided I liked him a lot, even if he did scare me a wee bit.

As the weeks went past, Alec and I become closer and closer. I could sit and talk to him for hours. He was like my thoughts out loud. He was very strange, the first week or so he was very quiet and didn't open up at all but when I got to know him better I realised just how fragile he was. The things he said meant something; he wasn't like anyone I had ever met before.

"Have you ever had such a big secret that you couldn't tell anyone?" he said.

"No, not really" I replied.

"Can I tell you something, you can't tell anyone though?"

"Okay," I said unsurely.

He sat and stared at me for a couple of seconds and then he went completely silent. Then a few minutes later he started talking.

"I'm a form of evil, you should stay away from me and I can easily rule you," he said. He looked in my eyes as if they were open doors and I felt a shiver of fear go up my back. My stomach stirred in a twist of excitement, fear and confusion all at the same time.

I knew it sounded ridiculous but somehow it made so much sense. It explained why he looked so scarily beautiful. I felt like I didn't really want to be his friend anymore but I felt cornered now.

"But now there is no going back," Alec said to me. I stared at him, confused. "I know what you are thinking" he replied.

I sat there completely dazed. How was this even possible?

I didn't go to the drama studio after school the next day. I decided to go the next again day though, hoping he wasn't there. I walked into the studio and searched the whole hall. Nobody was there. The drama studio didn't have the same atmosphere for me anymore. It was creepier and I couldn't think straight. Then suddenly I heard Alec's voice.

"You didn't come yesterday" he said plainly. He managed to make every sentence he said seem like the end of a conversation. I looked round the room trying to see if he was there. Nobody seemed to be there. I kept hearing his voice, I didn't know if it was all in my head or if it was real. I was so confused; I didn't know what to do...

## **Hood**

Nathan Sinclair

Smells of cooked food fill the air; the sound of chatter from students all mixing together created a booming effect through the cafe. One cleaner was slowly hand picking rubbish from the tables dotted around the open-plan space.

I find Andrew sitting in a corner to the upper left of the area, tapping along to his music coming from his iPod. He has straightened black hair coming down to chin level and a fringe down to his eyebrows. He recently had his braces removed and now has a perfect gleaming smile which was shown as I arrived. He welcomed me with a usual "Alright?"

I replied with the same statement, an unusual thing to do if you were to think about it but it was the normal thing to do. I sat down next to him and I could hear the music coming through his iPod. I was amazed he could hear me through the noise of chatter and his music coming through a small black headphone in his left ear. I could barely hear from the squawk of first years alone but we both still managed to have a civilized conversation.

We usually sat at this part in the cafe - it felt like it was almost secluded from the main part of the open plan and in the winter morning it was warm due to the boilers located behind us. Many of our friends sat there, one of whom was Lee. He was a tall boy, large built, tree trunks for legs and a strong athlete. Despite his frightening appearance, he was funny and could get along with anyone. He just sat down a few minutes after I did, red faced and with a trickle of sweat across his left cheek. This was a result of a double period of PE. Despite being a fit lad, not even Lee could handle the dread of being in the fitness room for forty five minutes. To make it worse, the room had no windows or air conditioning. Plus, twenty sweating bodies probably didn't help!

Our area at the cafe was now becoming crowded, so we decided to go for a stroll around the school. We had almost completed a full circuit round when out of the corner of my eye I say someone looking at us through a crack in the drama room doors.

I alerted the others to what I saw. Andrew jumped back when he saw the eye. We ran to the drama doors and let ourselves in. We worked out where the window was and found it behind a large curtain. We drew them to reveal nothing but a couple of pens and a rubber resting on the window ledge. We were baffled. How could anyone have got out? We went in the only door, unless...someone was still in the room! The thud of rushing footsteps against the laminate flooring made us turn sharply; we only caught the blur of the large, black hooded figure bolt through the doors out of sight.

We stood motionless for a few seconds until Lee walked over to the moving curtain where the hooded mystery had appeared from. Nothing. We walked back to our spot in the cafe; none of us had a clue what had happened or even what we should do. We just sat down and

pretended it had never happened. No one would ask what we were up to - many people wandered aimlessly around the school.

I couldn't concentrate over the next two periods; my mind was on that black figure. What were they up to? There is nothing of great value in the drama studio except a couple of chairs and a random disco ball which hung from the ceiling. Finally, the bell rang and I could get home, away from the chaos which is school. When I walked outside the front door there was a large group huddled around something, probably another pointless fight. I saw Andrew and I asked him what was going on. He told me to take a look for myself.

I pushed through the crowd to see a body of a large man wearing a chequered shirt with black suit trousers and pointy brown shoes. He was lying face down on the floor, blood seeping from his side but in my peripheral vision I saw a black hooded jumper.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Robyn Clamp** is a third year pupil from Inveralmond Community High School, and lives in Livingston. She likes to spend time with her horse when she can. She enjoyed the Writers in Schools experience.

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**Craig Forrest** goes to Inveralmond Community High School and takes an Engineering course at West Lothian College. He currently lives in Livingston but was born in Edinburgh and supports Heart of Midlothian FC. This is the first time he has had his writing published.

**Rhowain Harvey** is a third year pupil at Inveralmond Community High School. She lives in Howden with her Mum, Dad and little brother.

**Olivia Huber** is a S3 pupil at Inveralmond Community High School. She lives with her Mum and little brother, Samuel. She enjoys music and is inspired by nature with all its beauty. She thoroughly enjoyed Writers in Schools as it made her more confident in reading and sharing ideas in front of a class room.

**Rachel King** is 14 years old. She lives in Pumpherston. She loves Irish dancing and is currently training for the World Championships in Dublin.

**Daniel Mackinnon** is 14. He lives in Ladywell, Livingston. Most of his writing is about zombies and paranormal stuff.

**Aiesha Marr** is a musical genius. She is inspired by herself as she has always been creative. Her future is in Ibiza as a superstar DJ. Her fans adore her!

**Zak Morrison** is 14. He loves to play drums and is good with computers. He is inspired to write by his surroundings. His favourite place is his room and his favourite object is his drumkit.

**Nathan Sinclair** is 14 years old and lives in Livingston. He plays guitar and is a season ticket holder at Rangers FC. He is inspired by Alex Turner and Liam Fray. His story is based on his school friends.

**Drey Stevenson** is 14 and lives in Livingston. He plays drums (better than Zak!) He is in third year at Inveralmond Community High School. He likes yellow cats.

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**Ryan Thomson** is 14 years old and he really likes football. His story is based in a school.

**Katie Anna Walsh** was born on 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 1997. She lives in Livingston and is writing a novel called *Black Fur*. She has 2 dogs, 1 cat, a guinea pig and a hamster. She lives with her Mum, Dad and sister, who owns a gerbil. She enjoys baths and writes while eating jubblys and typing on her computer. She wants to be a palaeontologist.

**Georgia Welsh** is 14 years old. She is the middle child between her two brothers. She is passionate about fashion and her aspiration for the future is to move to New York to pursue a career in the fashion industry.

**Sam Young** is a S3 pupil at Inveralmond Community High School. He is 14 and likes playing video games and going out. He is inspired by himself, and his story came from weird ideas.



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