

Short story contest 2021

Pondicherry New Delhi Marseille Rome Milan Varna Hong Kong
Dubai Tokyo Phnom Penh Kuala Lumpur Jakarta Johannesburg

Middle School

Version non anonymisée

Hellin Fratto (Pondicherry)

C-2021-1

Colahtary2.0

It was almost morning. The darkest part of the night just before dawn, and though the sun wasn't up yet, I was because I had a train to catch. I was going on a vacation.

Covid 19 was finally over and just a reminder we are in 2025. I was born in 2010 so it had been like forever since I had last travelled. I was running and jumping with joy as if there was lava covering my bedroom floor.

I prepared myself and hurried down to the living room. I saw my parents, they smiled and said "Hurry Joey, we're going to be late! Come on let's go!"

We packed our bags, threw our luggage into the boot and entered the taxi, we had to hurry.

30 minutes later we had finally arrived at the train station.

We raced into the station, and after 5 minutes of squishing into the crowd, there it was-the train we were going to take. I hadn't gone on a train in 5 years.

We entered the train. It was surprisingly cool. My jaw dropped to the floor because of how amazing I found it and my eyes were wide open with interest.

I was staring at every single detail.

My family finally stepped into a train compartment and we settled down.

I noticed an old man sitting in the same compartment. That didn't bother me but he looked kind of weird though.

The train started to move faster and faster and we were finally off to New York.

A few hours flew by and although there was nothing to do except being on my phone...

The old man hadn't moved since we had left the station, that was bizarre.

It was around 7 PM. The train provided food, we ate and went to bed. We were still 10 hours away.

Suddenly I woke up. I didn't jump out of bed like in the movies but quickly opened my eyes. Everyone was sleeping but when I turned my head, I saw the old man with a glass tube like the ones scientists use.

Everything was blurry but I think he was smiling at the glass tube. I thought it was just a bad dream so I closed my eyes and fell back to sleep.

I woke up in the morning and saw my father and mother where reading. "Hi!" I said. "Hi," they replied

I turned my head and...

Oh My God!!! I saw the old man sitting in the same position.

He was giving me goose bumps

We were only 2 hours away.

My parents smiled and said, "Hey Joey, we're going to get some breakfast at the restaurant.

"Ok, sure!" I replied

I was now alone with the creepy old man.

A few minutes went by and my parents were still not back, so I decided to wait a bit more.

Suddenly the old man opened his mouth and whispered with his crooked voice:

"Hey kid, just for your info, everyone is going to die for sure, that's the promise I made."

My eyes filled with fear, he was probably joking, but I had a tiny feeling he was telling me the truth.

I tried to ignore him but it was impossible, so I opened my mouth and said:

"What do you mean by that, is this a prank or what, because it is not funny!"

"No." he answered, "I have the proof right here, right now."

He pulled out something made of glass.

It was the same glass tube I had seen last night.

here was a small tag that said, 'Colahtary2.0'. With a big grin he proceeded to tell me it was the new virus that killed people instantly.

I thought he was talking nonsense. For example, he said that he was the doctor who created Covid19.

"You are one of the first people, apart from the government that knows I have created the virus. Anyway, let's set this virus free.

I couldn't believe it, wasn't it a bat that had spread the virus?

I was petrified. I couldn't move but I had to do something.

He was going to open it.

I'd had enough of this stupid quarantine.

I grabbed the tube out of his hands and ran as if the world depended on me.

Right in front of me were my parents.

I could hear the old man behind me.

"Mom! Dad! Help!"

My father saw me and ran towards me. He grabbed me and threw me back, pushing the doctor away.

Suddenly a policeman came out of nowhere. He looked at the doctor and recognized him.

He was wanted worldwide.

The policeman handcuffed him and arrested him.

I was still petrified.

I told my parents everything and surprisingly they believed me.

Finally, we arrived in New York and were awarded 10 000 000 dollars.

It was so unreal. We went back to the villa we had rented thanks to the money we had received, and we celebrated...

By the evening I was exhausted, but suddenly I remembered something.

I ran to my mom and dad and asked, "What happened to the virus?"

It has been secured in a highly protected military base.

Finally, I felt so relieved and shouted, "That's great!" Then with a lower voice, I said "Anyways, I'm going to sleep, goodnight".

Good night Joey, sweet dreams.

I smiled and went to my room feeling proud and happy and finally fell asleep.

I woke up feeling as if there was an earthquake. Everything was blurry.

I washed my face and sat on my bed . Suddenly I heard a familiar voice.

That crooked voice chuckled.

I turned around and guess who it was? Standing in the doorway was the doctor.

The most shocking thing was that he had the glass tube in his hand.

He looked at me and whispered "Times up" he took the cap off and...

Hamdi Said (New Delhi)

C-2021-2

Limbo

It was almost morning, the darkest part of the night just before dawn. And though the sun wasn't up yet, I was because my life just got turned upside down. My parents and siblings were victims of a car accident, the very people I grew up with for nineteen years. Tears had been going down my face for hours. All I felt was anxiety. A big hole had been left inside my heart. Loneliness and depression were all that went through my mind. I wished that these feelings would go away. I went to sleep after that.

Morning arrived. I woke up in the middle of my room, which was quite a mess and smelled badly. I thought about cleaning it up, but I could not move my hands or legs. I closed my eyes and opened it again. I was floating in mid-air. I thought I was still sleeping so I pinched my arm to wake up. But I felt nothing, I lost my sense of touch, I could not feel anything. I looked down because something smelled bad. It was me; my body was on my bed. "DID I DIE", I yelled. I closed my eyes again. I continued yelling because I could not believe what I saw. It was as if my soul left my body. Well, it did. LITERALLY. My brain was thinking of horrible outcomes, but I felt nothing because I knew no one would miss me. I tried to open the door, but my hand just passed through the doorknob, I went through my door and went outside, there were others just like me floating and there were others walking normally. I went to talk to the nearest floating person.

-Hi, do you know where I am?, I asked.

-You must have died.

-WHAT? Is this the afterlife? Why am I not in heaven?

-No this is still the realm of the living, those who died unhappy live here for the rest of their life, and the others go to the afterlife.

-But I do not think I died, I just went to bed.

-Then why are you here? He asked me.

-That is what I want to know.

-I was killed by my wife

-Why did she kill you?

She killed me, so she could get custody of our child.

After hearing his story, I left him to question other people. Every single one of them had lived the worst possible life, they had lost their loved ones then became

miserable, some of them committed suicide, some of them were even murdered by the people they trusted the most.

I floated outside and wandered around all day only thinking about lives which were more miserable than mine, then I went inside an alley and I saw a homeless man getting trashed and hit by a bunch of gangsters, but I could not do anything because no one could see me or touch me. I went back home at dawn and went to sleep. The next day when I woke up, I was still floating, I went outside and wandered in the park, where I saw an old woman sitting on a green bench, feeding pigeons. She was wearing a yellow hat and had a bag of breadcrumbs. I went and sat next to her.

-Hello there, she said.

I looked around to see if she was talking to someone but no one else was there except me, I thought she was sane.

-Hello there, she said again.

-Wait can you see me?

-Of course, I can see every ghost, I am the guardian of this realm.

-A ghost? I responded.

-Yes, that's what you are, you are still here because you are attached to the living world, why won't you leave this world?

-I do not know how I died.

She touched me and everything became dark suddenly. I heard a baby screaming and my parent's voice saying "it's a BOY, he is beautiful". My eyes opened; I saw it was me being born. Everything became dark again, I saw a cake with two candles on it, "Happy birthday Shelby" was written on it, then I heard people chanting "happy birthday to you". It was my second birthday; my parents were there. My life kept flashing in front of my eyes, from the first time I held my little brother to my first day of school, to my first football match until my nineteenth birthday. Then I saw it. The day my family died; I was taking an exam to get into a university when I got a call from the hospital. I rushed there but when I arrived, I saw my siblings and parents on the bed covered in blood and metal shards. I was too late.

The lady next to me was crying, "you lived a great life and I'm sorry for your loss". Where are we? We are inside your memories, to see how you died". Everything became dark again, this time I was in my room. I was asleep with tears going down my face. A black widow spider came down from the ceiling and bit me. Then we went back to the normal world.

-Oh, so I was killed by such a tiny creature, life really hates me

-It was just unfortunate, there will be many unfortunate moments like this but do not become sad, do not blame it on someone, use it as a learning experience.

-I want to go back to my old life, I will never become sad again please give me one more chance.

-Pray to God, ask him for a second chance.

-I wish to go back to my old life before my parents died. Please god.

Everything vanished and light came.

I heard a beeping sound. It was my alarm, my mother came in and told me “you better not be late, you have your exam today”. I got up and hugged her tightly. It was just a dream. A dream I knew I was gonna remember forever.

Marie Tissier (Kuala Lumpur)

C-2021-3

The Elevator Mystery

It was almost morning, the darkest part of the night just before dawn. And though the sun wasn't up yet, I was awake and taking the elevator up to see what my neighbors were doing. The reason I was doing this was because I heard a tortured wail followed by a thud from upstairs and had to satisfy my curiosity by taking a closer look.

The door of the elevator opened; I ran out. I was in front of the door, it was covered in a red liquid. Blood?

I smelled it but no it was just paint. I had completely forgot about their renovations. I knocked at their door.

Josephine opened the door. She looked very scared. Her face was pale and her eyes wide open. I asked what happened:

"It's Patrick, she said. He was sleep walking when I woke up. Then he fell on the floor. Since he is old, I decided to go and see if his heart was beating but it's not. I think he just had a heart attack. What do I do? Can you please call the ambulance?"

"Of course, just give me 2 minutes."

A few minutes later the ambulance arrived. They had to bring Patrick to the hospital and see what they could do for him, but the doctors didn't have a lot of hopes, his heart stopped for a very long time. We would need a miracle for him to survive. Josephine started crying. Her husband was the only family she had left.

Five minutes later, the ambulance and the old couple had left.

Quite an eventful morning and I don't know if I could go back to sleep after this.

A few hours later, I woke up with some excellent news. Patrick had survived, he would just need a few operations to recover.

Then, the day went by normally. I went to work, had few presentations then got home and went for a quick run.

After my run I went down to see few of my friends. We talked for a while. It was getting dark, so we all decided to go back home.

I don't really know why, but I wanted to sit down. As I was sitting, I heard someone swearing. I looked around but didn't see anyone. I was probably daydreaming, but now a man was sitting next to me. I could barely see his face, but he was smelling a bit weird. I didn't know how to describe it. I could feel something bad just happened or will happen.

I was going to go back home but I felt this presence next to me. The man was following me. The elevator arrived. He went in with me. I press the number 45, my appartement's level. I couldn't look at him. When I felt like I had enough courage to face my fear, I looked up.

He was wearing very expensive clothes; he was holding a golf club. But that wasn't the interesting fact about him. His shirt was full of blood, with a hole at his heart's level. Blood was coming out. It looked like he was going to die in front of me. I knew I had to do something about it. At the fourth floor, a lady came in. She looked at me, then at him. Did she think I was the man's murderer?

The atmosphere was as cold as the wind in winter in Antarctica.

The lady left a few floors later, when she got out it looked like she blamed me for something.

I had to asked him what happen. I started talking:

"Sorry mister, may I ask what happened to you?"

"Yes, you may know what happened. So... he said with a very small voice. I was leaving the golf course, when somebody came in my cart. At first, I didn't see him because I was at the back putting my bag. He was sitting there. He was holding a knife. I wanted to leave but I couldn't, I was too afraid. Then that happened, the man was showing his shirt full of blood."

"I'm so sorry. Do I need to call anyone?"

"Don't be sorry, you didn't do anything wrong and no you don't need to call anyone."

Then everything happened so fast...

The doors opened; the man took something out of his pocket. I didn't see what it was. I turned around and he wasn't there anymore. He was in front of me. He had an evil look; I felt a sharp object cutting me. I looked down at my arm, it was covered in blood, the old and rich man was trying to kill me!

When I woke up, I couldn't remember what happened and where I was.

I could only see that I was in a white bed, in a room with blue and white wall and that smelled like a hospital. I was in a hospital! Few minutes after I had woken up a nurse came and yelled:

"She woke up! Doctor! "

The doctor started to talk to me, after, everything disappeared.

Everything became black. I just heard:

"Is she alive or dead?"

Anaïs Gourmelen (Hong Kong)

C-2021-4

The Keys to My Daughter

WINNER: BEST SHORT STORY 2021

It is almost morning, the darkest part of the night just before dawn. And though the sun isn't up yet, I am, I lie on my mattress, as hard as a rock, feeling the metal springs press into my body, staring at the familiar cracks on the ceiling while my breath comes out in short gasps. 7852 days I have been deprived of life and liberty. Over the years my days have become one big blur, but this particular morning, I think with dread about the daunting day that lies ahead. I slowly inhale and smell the stale scent of the cell seeping through the musty walls. I wrap myself tightly in the rough and ragged blanket, hugging my knees to my chest and curling up into a ball; wanting to feel safe, but fully aware that my looming fate was inevitable. My feet touch the cold metal bed frame and I can hear my inmates tossing and turning through the thin walls, lost and forgotten souls. I reach out to my barren night table for one of my only possessions, a photo of Penelope. I clasp it in my hands and bring it close to my face.

21 years ago, I committed a crime. A crime dedicated to avenging my dear daughter's death. On the 9th day of July 1984, my sweet Penelope was taken from me. She had been playing on the street in the summer sun, with her four-legged pal, Jeffrey, when a drunk driver lost control of his vehicle, smashed into her and drove away without any mercy for the little child he had just run over. How abhorrently cold-hearted was he? When I found her it was already too late. She was lying on the stone street, still, silent and as cold as ice. I didn't know how long she had been lying there. She had only been ten years young when her life was murderously taken from her. I vividly remember her sprawled body, crooked and covered in blood, with her gaping wounds and her guts spilling out onto the tarred road. This image haunts me until today - but it will be the last and final day it will haunt me, for today is day 7852. My last day standing.

The rage I felt towards the creature who had taken my beloved daughter from me was as overpowering and uncontrollable as the winds of a hurricane. I became

obsessed. All I wanted to do was to free this world of this monster, once and for all. He deserved no right to be alive while my daughter was lying all alone and forsaken in her grave. I had this recalcitrant feeling of wrath, so I stalked him for days until I finally tracked him down. Before killing this demon from hell, I looked into his loathsome eyes one more time, the body of my dead daughter flickering in their reflection. A life for a life, I was now a murderer.

My dearest Penelope, why did this have to happen to you? My sweetest, most innocent and precious little girl. I remember clearly and dream about all the fun times we had together. Remember when we went sledging down the road in front of our cosy winter cabin in the first-morning snow and then built a seven-foot snowman? Remember how I lifted you up high for you to push the knobbly carrot into its face? I remember. I remember how your face lit up and how your eyes twinkled proudly like the stars in the sky. Remember when I helped you decorate your eighth birthday cake with colourful sprinkles and your favourite candies? Remember when I took you to school for the first time and you wouldn't let go of my hand? I remember. I remember how your tiny, little warm fingers clung to my hand anxiously, as I squeezed you reassuringly, kissing your soft cheek goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye.

7852 days. The rays of sunshine start to peek through the narrow window. The sun is rising and I close my eyes to try and bring back more precious memories of my Penelope. I drift off into a nebulous sleep when I am brusquely woken up by the jangling of keys. I fear no more - Penelope I will be with you soon.

Margaux Cairns and Sidonie Russell Mazars (Johannesburg)

C-2021-5

Back in Time

WINNER: MOST ORIGINAL 2021

It was almost morning, the darkest part of the night just before dawn. And though the sun wasn't up yet, I was because I had the strangest nightmare. The horrible nightmare started with the vision of a clock ticking backwards, going faster and faster. People started walking backwards, until there were less and less people, less and less buildings, less and less trees, less and less animals, until there was just me...

It felt so real, even though I knew it was impossible I had to look out my window and check the time on Big Ben. It was 3:03 in the morning, but as I looked closer, I noticed something strange. But it couldn't be, could it? It seemed like the clock was ticking backwards! Was I still dreaming? When I looked at the sky, I observed that the planes were flying backwards, when I looked at the street, I saw cars driving backwards! I was so bewildered that I had to make sure that Big Ben wasn't broken, so I checked the time on my phone, it was 2:58! Then I received a message from my friend Lucy, so of course I read it, but I realised that I had already read this message a week ago! I didn't understand... I felt so confused... it made me feel sick! I told myself that this was all in my head, so I went back to bed. I was so scared that my dream was coming to life that it kept me awake. I didn't know when and I didn't know how, but I finally fell asleep.

As I woke up I noticed a giant poster with the words "The year 2000 end of the world?", as anyone would, I was totally dumbfounded! I knew it was the year 2020... So once again I needed to check the date on my phone, but surprisingly it was nowhere to be found. When I was looking for my phone I realised that my room was completely different, it was as if I had woken up in a stranger's room! Suddenly I heard a loud voice:

"Zoe! Zoe! Wake up! You're gonna be late for school! Hurry! Get down here!"

It sounded like the person was talking to me but it wasn't my mother's or my father's or my little brother's voice, and my name is not Zoe. I ignored the voice, but a few seconds later I heard a person stomping up stairs. Out of nowhere a man in pyjamas burst into my room!

"Zoe your mother told you to..."

A terrible scream broke through his lips.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhh! Celine, Celine get in here! Call the police!"

I could hear my heart beating in my chest! It was beating so fast that it felt like I was going to explode! I was shocked that I couldn't speak or move, I felt paralyzed! Then a large woman with a blue pyjama dress burst into the room.

"What's going on?! Who are you?!"

She pulled out a frying pan from behind her back and said:

"Where's my daughter?"

And I don't remember what happened but all I know is that everything went black... When I woke up a woman in a police outfit was staring at me from above, in a soothing voice she said:

"Are you alright dear?"

And I said:

"W...where am I?"

"You're in Bethnal Green Police Station, in London." She replied.

"What year are we in?" I asked.

But she didn't answer and said:

"What's wrong?"

"But what year are we in?!" I insisted.

Finally, she answered:

"It's the 29th of December 1999 dear."

I was so confused... she was wrong... was she?

"But no... we're in 2020..." I replied.

"Oh no, not again! George, we have the same problem!"

"Again!?" said a man with a deep voice.

The policewoman brought me to a room where there were other people who apparently had my same problem.

"We're in the year 2020, aren't we?" I asked.

"That's what we thought too..."

Léa Kawakibi (Dubai)

C-2021-6

A Mysterious Day

WINNER: MOST ORIGINAL 2021

It was almost morning, the darkest part of the night just before dawn. And though the sun wasn't up yet, I was because of a voice, murmuring in my ear "Andrea." It said, my body tensed, and a shiver climbed its way up my body, my heart was thumping in my body, "Hello?!" I shouted, alarmed, I got off my bed and slowly walked around it to turn on the lights in my room; I was paranoid because after all I live alone.

After a few minutes of contemplating if I should head downstairs to search around the house or stay in my room. I chose the latter, so I sat there on the floor, my knees pushed against my chest for protection and scissors in my hand, I was too scared to go downstairs and look for a knife and scissors were the only best option left. "Andrea, come out," it said this time from outside the door. "Who are you?! And what do you want from me?" I spoke, surprising myself. I waited for an answer, but none came. Sucking up all my courage, I decided to get up and open the door, the scissors in my hand stayed close to my body as I walked out of my room, my feet began walking by their own accord, down the stairs and in the kitchen. I grabbed a proper knife and decided to set the scissors down. "Andrea outside," the voice spoke again. It sounded familiar, as if I had heard the voice my whole life but I couldn't pinpoint who it belonged to.

The irrational part of me was telling me to listen to the voice and go outside, the other part of me, the rational part was screaming at me to call someone, the police, mom, dad, anyone. I grabbed my phone from the kitchen isle and clicked on it waiting for it to open, it didn't. Think, think, think, I rushed myself to think of something, anything "Andrea, go outside" I tensed, as if I had been drawn to the voice, my legs began walking towards the door that lead to the backyard. Stop, I told myself, but I couldn't. Stop, stop, stop, I tried telling myself, as I opened the fence in the backyard, and faced the forest.

I lived a couple of hours away from the city, I wanted to have some "fresh air" and so I got my house near a forest and a lake, I realized that that was one of the worst ideas I had ever had. As if this couldn't get any worse I felt someone looking at me. I looked around, but I couldn't find anything, until....I met bright green eyes, just like mine, looking straight at me, a man. "Who are you, and what do you want from me?"

I questioned, hiding my knife behind my back. I awaited for a response from the man, but he only smiled at me creepily as if daring me to follow him as he turned around and started walking in between the long forest trees, and I did just that, I followed.

If I thought my heart couldn't beat any louder before, I was wrong, very wrong. My heart was beating as fast as the light. It seemed to be around 4:30 am, the sun was starting to appear. I didn't really know why I was following this man; I felt a certain pull to him, I couldn't describe it. He was wearing black clothes and a black mask covering his entire face but his eyes... I looked at the man again only to find out that he had disappeared. I stopped walking and looked around for him only to come to the conclusion that he had vanished, but to where?

It took me a few seconds to realize that I was in the middle of the forest all by myself, the sound of leaves rustling brought me back to reality, I looked to my right where the sound came from, pulling my knife out from behind me. "Who is there?", I asked but as usual I was met with silence. The rustling continued but this time it was coming from all directions, as if someone was running circles around me, "Keep walking, left", the voice spoke once more, but this time I didn't walk, instead I voiced my thoughts. "Tell me who you are!" I shouted, not really knowing to whom. The silence answered me once more. "What do you want from me?!" I screamed, this time the voice answered: "Go left". My feet dragged me to the left side of the forest once more defying me.

I was met with a small field and in the middle of it was a well. The field gave of an eerie aura and the well added to that. I walked up to the well. It looked old, and the water was dripping off the top and into the well. "Look", the voice said but this time with a hint of excitement. What I saw terrified me to my very core, a tear slid down my cheek. I started backing up, while more tears streamed down my cheeks...It was me, but not my reflection in the water, it was me, my eyes opened staring straight at me and my red hair floating in the water, my skin paler than usual...I looked dead.

I bumped into something and turned around to see the man. I tensed and started backing up again, my back hit the well, and I started screaming "Help!", "Help me!" but no one answered. The man towered over me and said with a deep voice "Behind you." And that's when a hand came up from the water and grabbed me by my neck, pulling me into the well.

Soukayna Aissaoui (Jakarta)

C-2021-7

The Night He Started to Haunt Me

It was almost morning, the darkest part of the night just before dawn. And though the sun wasn't up yet, I was because... I had had this dream, not the good one but the bad one, the one that won't let you sleep, the one that stays on your mind for a day, a week, or even a year!

All this started a month ago. My parents would not yet be back but, because school finished earlier, I went home. I was hungry and walked straight into the kitchen and started making myself a snack. Suddenly I heard noises... someone else was in the house. I told myself that my mind was playing some tricks with me and that I only needed to think about something else. Suddenly, I heard... Yes, someone was calling my name! It was terrifying. I hears "...ad... ie... Made... mADie... come here..." For a minute, I thought Mom or Dad were home, but I quickly realized that they couldn't have returned so soon. And that, anyway, none of them would call me that way.

I went to check the house, even though I was terribly scared of the fact that someone may be in my house. Plus, I was on my own...

The noises led me to my room, where the mess right away indicated that someone had been there. But that was not all! I had the feeling that someone was looking at me. I turned around but couldn't see anything suspicious. In a frenzy, I looked everywhere, under my bed, behind my desk... nothing. I had to call the police, my neighbors, or Theo, my older brother. As I was entering the police number, I noticed a passing shadow to my right. I could not make out who it was and became too scared to punch in the number. I was trembling, desperate. I walked back to the living room, grabbed and opened my sketchbook: drawing was the only way I had to stay calm.

Few sketches and 10 minutes later, the front door opened. "Hey Mad, what are you doing here? I've been looking for you everywhere!" said Theo. He can be annoying at times but at that precise moment, he was a lifesaver! I told him everything I had experienced since I had first entered the house, my fear and what I had seen. But he did not believe me and said that I watched too many horror movies (while the

opposite is true). I told him that I would show him, and prove him wrong, but I was still too scared to move.

Eventually, I stood up, and asked him to follow me. I could still hear someone calling me, but this time the voice was coming from Theo's room. I could tell he was getting scared.

We had just entered his room when the door slammed behind us as a shadow of someone came sticking down from the ceiling. I took my phone, turned on the torch and... I saw it. It was the most terrible creature of all times! It had large eyes, a huge mouth and a weird nose. It had an extended neck and was taller than me! It had a small body with long hair. Worse, this monster was slowly walking towards me, getting closer and closer. To my horror, Theo simply stood there, filming the whole scene, without moving a finger to protect me. Suddenly, the terrible creature yelled as loud as a helicopter! Can you imagine how gross and terrifying this was? Theo finally walked to my side, which stunned the monster. The yelling creature rushed out to the balcony and said, "I will haunt you till the end of your life. Don't ever forget, I'll return one day..." And it left.

And I never saw it again. I mean, who knows? It might return but if it does, I will be ready for it. Of course, I am still scared and I am sure Theo feels the same.

Alice Chevillard (Phnom Penh)

C-2021-8

Again

WINNER: BEST WRITTEN 2021

It was almost morning, the darkest part of the night just before dawn. And though the sun wasn't up yet, I was because I couldn't sleep as I got up from my bed, my head was filled with thoughts ... Suddenly I saw from the corner of my eye a graving in the wall that said one word "Again", How had that got there? Thoughts came rushing through my head.

How had I ended up here? I couldn't quite remember, all I could be sure of, was that I was now locked up in a prison cell, alone and scared. I didn't belong here, I thought to myself. What had I done to end up in such an awful place?

"Prisoner 405! Will you shut up and get to bed!" said a loud voice coming from the cell next to mine.

"Uh- sorry I was just -"

"I don't care, just shut up will you!" said the voice again even louder."

This is why I don't belong here, I hate it here, I thought to myself quietly.

A few hours later I heard the whistle, it was the wardens, they were doing the roll call.

"Prisoner 400, Prisoner 401, Prisoner 402 ..." called the chief warden with a loud and angry tone.

When the warden chief got to me he said "Hmm what have we got here?"

"This sir, is Jack Odvill, he's here for murder, sir." said another warden.

What, I couldn't have committed a murder, I thought to myself.

"Hmm I see ..." said the chief as he passed on to the next cell.

When the roll call was finished, all the prisoners went down to the canteen. The canteen was a room where a bunch of tables and chairs were placed.

"May I sit here?" I asked a skinny, tattooed prisoner.

"Sure." he replied.

"Well it's nice to meet you, I'm Jack.-"

"Odvill, I know." he replied.

Oh how odd, I thought to myself, how does he know my name?

After breakfast, we were sent to the exercise yard to get some fresh air. The exercise yard was a very big plain area, where it was very hot. Most of the prisoners

were divided into different groups. I just sat alone thinking to myself. A few hours had passed , “DRINGGG” the bell rang , the wardens then came to take all of us prisoners . When we all lined up to go back into our building, a big man that had tattoos all over his body went behind me for the line up .

“Hmm so I hear you hate women and children ” said the big man.

“How odd I’ve never said anything about that and no I actually have nothing against women and children .”

“Haha well, apparently you didn’t like them on the 13th August 2018”

“That date seems familiar. I just can’t remember why ?” thought Jack

“Maybe go to the library corner, it's on the second floor. ” said the man with a grin .

As I went up the second floor, I could see on the corner of my eye prisoners staring at me . Once I reached the second floor, I saw the library . I went in, on the main counter desk was an old lady . “Hi Odvill, how are you today ?” said the old lady calmly

“Um hi miss, I’m good .” I replied, “Would you mind telling me where the journals for 2018 are ?” .

“My dear you already borrowed one, it’s in your cell .”

“Oh really , thank you I’ll go check .” .Weird I thought, I don’t remember it being there .

So I left to go to my cell , “DRINGGG” the bell rang it was already time for lunch ,I thought . I spent lunch on the same table as I sat on with the skinny prisoner . Although this time he wasn’t here . “DRINGGG” it was now time for the exercise yard again .

I again , stayed alone , sitting in the yard , my head drowning in thoughts . When the bell rang again , I lined up and went straight back into my cell . I was exhausted , but there was one thing that I wanted to do once I was in my cell . I pulled out the drawer , inside was a journal . As I looked at the journal I saw in the front cover , in big red letters the word ODVILL SERIAL KILLER , I couldn’t believe my eyes , was this real , this must be a mistake I thought to myself . As I read the journal “Jack Ovill has been convicted of murder for murdering his wife and his two daughters on the 13th August 2018, Jack Odvill has now also been diagnosed with Confusional Arousals , a sleep disorder that causes him to forget who he is everyday” “NO I couldn’t have done that, , this had to be a mistake . Suddenly everything turned black ...

It was almost morning, the darkest part of the night just before dawn. And though the sun wasn’t up yet, I was because I couldn’t sleep as I got up from my bed , my head was filled with thoughts ... Suddenly I saw from the corner of my eye a graving in the wall it said one word “Again”.