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SHORT STORIES
Lots of short stories written by the students of Writer’s Hub!

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NOT YOURS TO SELL

Henry Frazer

“It is with a very heavy heart that I send this email. The City of Melbourne Council has ended the 37 year tenure of The Venny.

Council has selected the large international development and aid corporation ‘Save the Children’ to be the new operations managers.” - Danni, The Venny inc.

Every afternoon, a group of kids wander down the hill to their daily place of fun and refuge. Their “second home”. A place where they can take risks, feel safe, try new things and belong, all while learning important life skills and building relationships with staff and each other. And The Venny has been doing this for 37 years.

This ‘communal backyard’ was established in 1981, with funding from the federal government, and set out to help disadvantaged children and everyone else who needed them. Over the years hundreds of children have benefitted from and loved The Venny, and many of their fondest memories took place inside it’s fence. The Venny has also grown and embedded itself in the community, responding and changing to what the kids wanted, run by a board of dedicated community members. Becoming, as far as all the kids are concerned, one of the most important parts of Kensington.

In 2014, the federal government cut funding to The Venny and all the other adventure playgrounds and communal backyards in Victoria. The City of Melbourne stepped in to support The Venny, providing emergency ‘top-ups’ of $63 000 every six months. During this time The Venny were also seeking out other ways of procuring funds, and were awarded Deductible Gift Recipient status and Charitable status in May 2015, as well as being successful in their first ever application for a philanthropic grant through the Lord Mayor’s Charitable Fund which was for three years of funding to support and help grow the corporate/philanthropic path of funding. The news of this success was given on the same day the managers of The Venny found out they had lost the playground to another corporation.

The City of Melbourne stated that they could not keep up the emergency top-up funding, and had to make a decision about their role in the ongoing funding of the service. As the amount required exceeded $150 000 pa, the Local Government Act required the council to put the service out for tender. The Venny inc. tendered for what they had always thought was their own service, but were unsuccessful. The decision by Council instead gave the international aid corporation ‘Save the Children’ the new management of the playground.

One of the requirements of the tendering process was full confidentiality on The Venny inc.’s part. So it was an outraged community that suddenly learned their much-loved resource had been given away to be changed forever.

The children at The Venny could not believe the decision that had been made. While some had been spoken to by consultants during the tender period, it had never been raised that The Venny was up for tender. Some were left feeling that their voices had not been heard, others felt that their voices had not been respected.

On the 11th of May, a community meeting called by the City of Melbourne was held in the Kensington Town Hall. Despite being “one of the most poorly advertised community consultations you have ever organised”, as one community member said, a large and passionate crowd had still been called to arms. Representatives from Save the Children and the City of Melbourne were there to answer any questions the community had. Kids were running around urging people to sign petitions, and many held up signs saying ‘Save the Venny!’ Many adults had grim faces, but the atmosphere in the room was enough to cheer people up and give them hope and support.

Alison Duncan, councillor for community wellbeing and safety began by explaining the past events leading up to the decision to tender. She said that after the board “were not able to secure long term funds” the Council had stepped in to save the day. As I have mentioned before, however, The Venny board had managed to secure status that opened up new avenues of fundraising, and they had also put in an application for the Lord Mayor’s Charitable
Fund which was successful.

Many community questions were raised concerning the problem of community consultation, all of them followed by loud applause. The council claimed they had consulted people at the Venny, which was true, however it had remained confidential and didn’t represent enough of the community. In the end it seemed clear that the decision made by council to give up The Venny didn’t represent anyone, consulted or not.

The kids’ main concerns were voiced by several children. One boy asked of Save the Children “Will the Venny still be risk-taking?” The reply was in the positive, but again the council failed to mention that as the new management would be following the council’s OH&S restrictions, some of the playground would have to be removed and altered and new rules, like one banning fires, would be brought in.

Other questions were raised concerning the relationships between the Staff at The Venny and the children. These are perhaps the most important part of the entire service and one of the main reasons the current management were so torn up about the decision made. It was also discovered that while Save the Children said they “wanted to keep on as many of the original staff as possible, as we know how important these ongoing relationships are for the children,” under the corporation’s requirements some certificates and diplomas were required that current staff did not have, and therefore despite their years of experience and important relationships with children, they will be forced to find work elsewhere. Melissa Martin, the student well-being officer at the local primary school said “...the City of Melbourne have failed to take into account the re-traumatization of these children. The Venny provides attachment relationships for children and, if you listen to the kids themselves, they will tell you “It just won’t be the same...without Danni, I won’t come back... no one will come...Save the Children are strangers, how can we be comfortable there?”

The council representatives eventually admitted that they had “stuffed up”, to great community approval. However, when asked to reconsider their decision, the council still refused, blaming legal guidelines and basically saying “our hands are tied”. The meeting has left the community more hopeful though, and everyone is very confident that their message has been passed across.

Catherine, a representative of Save the Children who I spoke to afterwards said that she wanted to see the Venny kept exactly the same, with only minimal changes. When asked why Save the Children tendered for the Venny, she replied that they wanted to be part of the ‘heart and soul of the community’ and that their work at Fitzroy adventure playground had been very successful and had prepared them to work here as well. They wanted to be a part of helping to continue The Venny into the future, to help the children and the community. But when you ask the kids, they generally reply “we don’t want to be ‘saved’. We don’t want Save the Children”. However, it is important to remember that, while many people feel that Save the Children had no business replying to the tender for The Venny, it is the City of Melbourne council who are the people to blame.

I also talked to Councillor Alison Duncan about the tender process and the council’s reaction to the community. She assured me that the tender was very well monitored and that a two-year review would be done to see if the right decision had been made, and if not then the service could go back out to tender. However, by then, the damage would have been done, much of it irreparable.

Danni is a senior staff-member and co-manager at The Venny, and has established wonderful relationships with the children who attend the Venny. Most kids say that it wouldn’t be the same without her, and the others just don’t want to talk about it. Under new management, there would be no positions available for either Danni or the current manager Dave. I interviewed Danni on a sunny Friday afternoon, with kids running and riding all around us outside the entrance to the Venny. In between kids jumping onto her lap and asking her to watch them perform all sorts of tricks, she told me about her biggest concerns about handing over the Venny to Save the Children.

“I am most concerned about the severing of relationships between the staff and kids. Under the new management, the staff will have to change and the kids will lose these important relationships”. This concern has been repeated by many people around the community. Danni also said “the erosion of this place is another big issue. We already know that the nest will be taken down, and bits of the castle will probably be altered. The kids won’t be allowed fires anymore...” The Venny as a community-run service has many positives, like being flexible in their structure and also escaping from council regulations around ‘safety’, allowing it to be a true backyard for all of the children. “In the last 15 years we haven’t had any serious injuries. I think we have had one broken arm...but compare that
to sports, or council playgrounds.” No matter how much goodwill is in the hearts of Save the Children, the fact that they are an international corporation and will be operating under council restrictions will never allow them to come close to replicating what Danni and Dave and the community behind the Venny have now.

On Sunday, May the 15th, a community barbecue was held at the Venny, with hundreds of people showing up to show their support. There were two petitions being signed, one asking Save the Children to retract their tender, and the other asking the City of Melbourne to reconsider their decision. While the fate of The Venny has been decided, the community will not let it go without a fight.

**Editor’s Note:** Henry researched, interviewed and wrote the article before the City of Melbourne intervened after enormous pressure from the community and gave The Venny back. However, we felt it important to include this piece as the Venny is a space for children and this piece is written by and from the perspective of the children who use the Venny.

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**Massive Open Online Courses**

Roland Wood

MOOCS are Massively Open Online Courses, which are free (mostly) and don’t have any requirements to participate in class. You can learn any subject or topic that is available. You can choose from any University or other institution from around the world. The possibilities are endless.

During the first term, I enrolled in “Learning How to Learn: powerful mental tools to help you master tough subjects”, instructed by Dr. Barbara Oakley and Dr. Terrence Sejnowski, hosted by the University of California in San Diego.

During my time participating in the course, I learnt many useful things such as the Pomodoro Technique: studying in small blocks of time and taking breaks, rather than just doing one block of study. Also it is a good idea to regularly test yourself on what you are learning, because reading over something several times does not teach it to you.

Currently I am studying a course on web development, which teaches 14 different programming languages for web development, and 11 websites to go with it. I did have to pay a small fee to participate in this course with Udemy, but the value for money is very much worth it. However, most MOOCs courses are free.

Other courses that I may participate in include: ‘Learn Russian’ and ‘Website Design with Photoshop’.

MOOCs truly are a wonderful example of student led learning because you pick the subject you study, and you are in control of the pace at which you learn.

If you would like to know more about MOOCs then you can speak to me or any of the following people:

- Shane Devine
- John Dunley
- Skye Frame
- Henry Frazer
- Jasdon Ha
- Bill Kamil
- Thomas Mathews
- Finn O’Brien
- Andrew Tran

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The Ethics of Keeping Marine Animals in Captivity

Annie Burrows and Jordan Le

On the 9th of March our Marine Biology class went to the Melbourne Sea Life Aquarium. While we were there we saw many unique sea creatures. Although it was fun to look at all the colourful fish and big stingrays, we noticed that all they could do was swim around their tanks for hours on end. Seeing all the penguins cramped together in a small enclosure made us realise that not all animals live in conditions that are suitable for them.

Later on in the term, we watched a documentary called “Blackfish”. It was made in 2013 and addressed the topic of the killer whales at Seaworld. This film did an excellent job of portraying the sometimes devastating consequences of keeping such intelligent and sentient creatures in captivity.

The documentary followed the story of one particular orca, Tilikum. He was captured in 1983 in the North Atlantic when he was only two years old. At this age he was already 3m long and by the time he was four Tilikum measured at 4.5m long with a weight of 1,814kg.

The first place Tilikum was held was at a place called Sealand of the Pacific. Sealand was a public aquarium in South Oak Bay, it consisted of a net hanging in a marina with a float around it. According to the trainers Tilikum was “amazing to work with” and “always eager to please”, they trusted him and were never uncertain when it came to working with him. However the two other female orcas at Sealand would gang up on him and cut him with their teeth.

In an interview with Steve Huxter, former director of Sealand, it was revealed that the former head trainer had used techniques that involved punishment. They would team a trained orca up with Tilikum, who was untrained, and send them off to do the same behavior, if Tilikum didn’t do it then both animals would be punished. They would be deprived of food to keep them hungry which would cause lots of frustration with the other animals, and in turn they would become frustrated with Tilikum. “There would be certain times when Tilikum would be covered head to toe in rakes”.

At Sealand of the Pacific the orcas would be stored in, what the trainers called, a module. Essentially what this was, was a metal shed in the water that measured around 6m across and 9m deep. With no light or stimulation all three orcas were kept in the module for at least two thirds of their time at Sealand. Every morning there would be new tooth rakes and sometimes even blood found on Tilikum.

On February 20th, 1991 a Sealand trainer, Keltie Byrne, was dragged into the pool and killed by Tilikum with the help of two other orcas. However the newspaper covered it up and said that she “drowned accidentally”. After the incident Sealand shutdown in 1992 and sold their remaining three orcas, including Tilikum, to Seaworld Orlando, where they were under the impression that they would not be used for shows.

Tilikum arrived at Seaworld weighing 5,443kg and was twice the size of any animal in the facility. Much like at Sealand, Tilikum was attacked viciously by the other orcas. Therefore Tilikum was kept in isolation, away from the others and was mainly put with them for breeding purposes.

Orcas are very social animals and always stay with their families. Each group have their very own unique language as a means of communication. At Seaworld none of the orcas were with their relatives, because of this there was a lot of aggression and violence.

On the 23rd of November, 1987 whale trainer, John Sillick was seriously injured when a six-ton orca jumped out of the water and landed on him, crushing John between itself and the orca he was riding. Even then the trainers at Seaworld were not given full details of the incident. The management at Seaworld told the papers that it was the trainers fault and that their killer whales were by no means aggressive.

On the 20th of April, 1971 a woman was pulled around the pool by an orca at seaworld, she suffered lacerations and puncture wounds. Another Seaworld trainer was pulled into the water and nearly drowned when she was playing with the orcas.
70+ orca and trainer accidents have happened at Seaworld and yet they continued to breed and swim with them. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) doesn’t want any interactions between the orca and trainer unless there is a physical barrier between them, because “swimming with orcas is inherently dangerous” and that “you can’t completely predict the outcome when you enter the water or their environment” - “stay out of proximity with the animals and you won’t get killed”.

On the 29th of November, 2006, trainer Ken Peters prepared for a rocket hop with Kasatka, a 2,267kg orca. Seconds after diving in, Kasatka seized Ken’s foot. She would dive down to the bottom of the pool, hold him there for at least a minute and then come back up. She would let go of one foot and grab the other. Ken managed to get away but both of his feet were damaged.

On the 7th of July, 1999 a dead man was found draped over the back of Tilikum, who had stripped him and bitten him. Again the story in the newspaper was completely different, according to it, the man had died of hypothermia. Even though Tilikum had a track record for killing, Seaworld kept him for the soul reason of breeding. That meant that around 54% of the orcas at Seaworld had Tilikum's genes.

Alex, a trainer at Loro Parque in Spain was killed by an orca. 12 months before his death Alex trained at Seaworld with their orcas using their techniques. When asked by a Seaworld attorney if Seaworld was affiliated with Loro Parque, the head trainer said no. which is a flat out lie, seeing as Seaworld provided Loro Parque with orcas to use in their shows.

Finally, nearly 19 years to the day Kelsie Byrne died, one of Seaworld’s best trainers was killed. On February the 24th, 2010 Dawn Brancheau was brutally killed by Tilikum during a relaxation session. He pulled her down by the arm and wouldn’t let go. Even after the death of three people Seaworld continued to defend their orcas, saying that it was clearly Dawn’s fault that she died and that she didn’t follow the right safety precautions.

After Dawn’s death Tilikum was put in an isolated pool, where he floated lifelessly, only to be brought out at the end of shows as the big splash. He would spend up to three hours just floating stationary in the water. On May 30th, 2012 judge Ken Welsch issued a ruling on OSHA vs. Seaworld, during shows, Seaworld trainers must now remain behind barriers, separated from the orcas. This statement concluded “Blackfish”.

On the 9th of November, 2015 Seaworld announced an end to its theatrical shows with orcas and on the 17th of March, 2016 Seaworld has further announced that it is putting an end to the orca breeding program and that this generation of whales will be its last.

To this day Tilikum is still alive, but he is dying due to a drug-resistant bacterial lung infection. Tilikum's life has changed how we view animals in captivity and has made us question our moral and ethical ideals. We think that it is great that Seaworld is putting an end to its shows and breeding program with orcas, but we also think that it shouldn’t have taken twenty years and three deaths to do so.
Alpine Camp
Sweeny Beckingsale with Finn and Likha

We asked the students who embarked on this journey to explain what made this trip special to them, what they got out of it and what they thought was interesting. Each of us went through a very different and personal experience, individually growing and learning.

Sweeny: There is no easy way to explain my time at Gnurad Gundidj school of student leadership. Being isolated with 44 kids was a very strange experience especially knowing that these people that I lived with and thought of as a second family were unknown to my biological family. My roommate, who I told everything, who I thought of as a brother, had never even held a conversation with my friends and family. I loved every moment of my time there and miss it dearly. Usually I am very open anyway but in my time on the camp I almost felt an obligation to speak my mind and I think everyone else did too. This is what made the friendships so strong and in just 7 weeks I made some friends that were better than some i’d known for years.

Likha: In Gnurad, I gained many new experiences, friends and skills. I did things I never thought I would be able to do, like ride a bike for 25km since I’m such a weak biker or go hiking with half of my weight on my back. I made many new friends which I still keep in touch with everyday. I would definitely say that I could call some life long friends. I also gained many personal skills. I became a lot more open to the point where I even cried in front of my group which was really embarrassing because I absolutely hate crying in front of people. I became more independent and confident. I experienced some ups and downs but I feel like I learnt from both and it really helped me become better as a person. I’ve made a lot of memories and would definitely do this kind of leadership opportunity again if I had the chance.

Finn: At Gnurad I really improved on my feedback skills as well as working in teams and taking responsibility. I can now take feedback on board and use it to my advantage. I also made some really great life friends and gained life skills. We went on massive endurance cycles and hikes, as well as doing indoor work like passports. We created a CLP or a Community Learning Project where we are helping our school and building a classroom, but not just any classroom, an outdoor classroom. I had to create a presentation to show how I have improved. I really opened up to the group and I talked about how I looked up to my parents and how I really stressed out if I feel like I didn’t make them proud.

John: Gnurad was special to me because it helped me become more friendly, social, and confident in my own abilities. It also got me to make lots of friends.

Editor’s Note: the students who attended the camp are now in the process of working on their community project. They are going to beautify the space outside the Resource Centre, replace the old mosaics and turn it into a space to hang out as well as a space that can be used for learning. Some of the money raised by MAC Parents at the election day sausage sizzle will be used to fund this project.
Safety Comic
Jamie Rodgers

All joking aside safety is a big issue and must be taken very seriously. When a teacher asks you to wear protective equipment in science classes among other forms of safety around the school. As small and pointless as the safety may seem and how difficult and irritating it can be, remember that just like in the comic even the smallest things can put you in danger. Thank you for taking this under consideration and enjoy the comic.

Why I chose to do a comic:
One of the key parts of the School newspaper is that we want to make it feel like a real newspaper with real journalism, one of the key parts of almost every newspaper is the selection of little comic strips in the back pages of the newspapers like Marmaduke and Garfield.
Wanting to see these little comics in our newsletter and also to use my passion for art as a resource in the newsletter I decided to make a little comic about safety. I think I wanted to make a safety based comic so that my article would actually have a significant message towards students instead of meaninglessly taking up writing space with a six square joke.
The comic was based in our school with fictional characters so that all students could somehow relate to this situation without it being dedicated to any single student.
Refugee Week Poem

By Fardawsa Gella

I say I’m sorry to my people back at home, you bled night and day to build our country, you cried a million tears when your son was forced to go fight for the enemy...oh how I wish I could wipe your tears.

A life of a refugee me, 14 year old Malik. 10 camps have been my home. Guardian name unknown because my mother got shot in front of my eyes when I was the age of 1. I wish I remembered her name just as much as I remember her scent.

I will never be enough, enough for this system and enough for you because you never respected my values. I got told I should stop speaking about my motherland so much, I’m sorry I never asked for your opinion. You will never strip my identity away from me, you may have denied my existence in your country, forced me to fight for the enemy and took my mother away from me but you will never take this strength, this intelligence, this bravery and my happiness because my pride is too much and I’ve gone a long way to give up. 14 years old Malik. 10 camps have been my home.

See when you look at beaches in the coast you see beauty don’t you? Imagine kids having fun, dancing till the sun comes down. You want to know what I see? Foreign men coming at night stealing fish, scaring kids. I’m used to seeing so much violence as a kid I wish I could at least taste peace. I remember when I was back home my dad told me 5 bombs went off in 50 minutes. Can you imagine that happening here, right now? Where would you go? Would you really not jump on a boat?

Did you watch the new tonight? Did you see my cousin? He was boarding a boat in the Mediterranean Sea. He didn’t make it neither 400 other refugees. Next week how many will die? Matter of fact how many will die tomorrow? How many have to suffer? How long will we ignore this fact that refugees are not illegal? They are humans breathing and living just like us except most wake up to bombs and us well most of us wake up too breakfast on our plates. Free this world free me, free them, free us.

Free free free how many times will I scream till you listen why can’t you hear my tears, listen to my struggle taking refugees to camps doesn’t fix any problems but causes mental issues and shows negligence, I beg you, stop treating them like prisoners, for I am one of them, for I am not a criminal, just a person trying to find peace.

“

To be called a refugee is the opposite of an insult; it is a badge of strength, courage, and victory.

[Tennessee Office for Refugees]
Gaming news
By Zander Bennet

Farcry Primal review

"FarCry: Primal" is one of my favorite games. I love playing it and it is a real challenge to tame all the beasts. Now you have more of a reason to kill things because you need to survive and that is the only way to because it is 10000 B.C. There is no help from other people in the game and the only other people that aren't your small tribe/clan are cannibals (udam). There are the sun/fire gods (izilla) which I haven't even gotten to yet. You can set anything on fire, your weapons, beasts (tamed or non-tamed), enemies and the world around you.

So you do have some advantages but whatever you do, don't mess around with honey badgers or elder mammoths, they will kill you with a few hits and you can barely run from them unless you are riding on a bear or a sabretooth tiger.

The crafting system is great because you can upgrade and craft many weapons. The graphics are great, and it has one of the best skill menus I have ever seen.

I rate it a 8/10.
Twisted Fairy Tales: Snow White
By Archie Frazer

To be honest I feel pretty bad about the whole poisoning thing, I suppose that seeing as I am queen and all it probably wasn’t the right thing to do, especially when it was my step-daughter. I have arranged weekly sessions with a psychiatrist to help prevent it happening again. Although I am paying him a lot, so far I haven’t got much out of it-he just says the same old things like ‘try and take deep breaths’ and so on. I am sure this is what I should do but when I get into one of my rages I just can’t bring myself to, ‘calm down’.

Right now I am in my musty old throne room sitting on my disgusting throne (I haven’t got around to getting one of those massage chairs) staring at my ‘magic’ mirror shattered on the floor (yes I broke it after the whole fairest of them all scenario). Although I do regret what I did to Snow its definitely not every day you get a chance to kill someone you hate.

My psychiatrist tells me I should say sorry to her (although I don’t think it’s a very good idea) so I decided to invite her to Starbucks for some coffee and for a chance to settle our dispute. When I told my psychiatrist, he was thrilled with the idea and said ‘it would be a great chance to ‘set aside’ our differences. So I sent Snow White an email telling her all the essentials and we would be meeting at 3.00 in two days time.

A couple of days ago I received an email from my step-mum the queen (yes she is still queen) asking me if I wanted to come down to Starbucks so we would get a chance to ‘chat’ about what had happened. I mean come on, who has the nerve to talk to someone you just tried to MURDER!?  

Anyway when I had finally set aside my anger (it only took a couple of hours) I had come up with a devious plan to go to the meeting, but bring with me some of my lipstick. Not just any old lipstick though it would be poisoned lipstick (I know pretty devious right?). The silly old queen will never see it coming, I thought, as I stepped out of my little cottage (I moved out of the prince’s castle when I dumped him. He just wasn’t doing it for me, you know always off saving other princesses, I was always scared he was two timing).

While I was walking towards the coffee shop I decided to freshen up a bit so I got my lipstick out of my bag and put it on. Unfortunately, as I was very stressed out about the upcoming meeting with my murderer. I put on the lipstick I had poisoned beforehand ready for the queen and I fell asleep again right there on the pavement wondering why I had even bothered.
Twisted Fairy Tale: Sleeping Beauty

By Amelia Mendes

Once upon a time in a far-off kingdom, a beautiful baby princess was born. To celebrate her birth, the king and queen held a huge party at their palace. Everyone was invited, including twelve fairies who were each going to bless the girl with gifts like kindness, honesty and obedience. However, the evil thirteenth fairy had not been invited and wanted to get revenge for being left out. She stormed into the palace as the last fairy was about to announce her blessing and used her dark magic to curse the infant, screeching, "When she turns fifteen she will prick her finger and die a slow, painful death!"

The thirteenth fairy then vanished dramatically in a puff of black smoke, leaving a stunned and horrified crowd.

The hall erupted into chaos as starving peasants filled their pockets with food, nobles started arguing anxiously and relatives of the princess began crying into their silk handkerchiefs. No one heard the small voice of the twelfth fairy calling out that she still had yet to bless the princess. She eventually lost patience and whispered that the princess would not die, but fall asleep until someone kissed her.

Fifteen years later, the baby girl had grown to fit the image that the fairies had imagined. She possessed all the talents that they had given her, which unfortunately did not include common sense.

She was sitting in her massive, expensive garden admiring a rose when a wizened old hag limped up behind her and croaked,

"That's a lovely flower, darling. Why don't you try smelling it?"

The princess turned around and smiled at her.

"Oh, thank you. I think I will," the princess replied, because two of her gifts were respect and obedience. She leaned towards the bush and the crazy, evil fairy, cackling with glee, shoved her into the thorns, where the innocent girl was pricked on her finger (as well as everywhere else), and instantly fell into a deep sleep.

Several years later, the legend of the cursed princess had become widespread and many men had entered the old castle tried to rescue her, never to be heard of again.

One day, a foolish young prince rode up to the thorn-covered palace. He was determined to save the dormant princess and declared himself the future king of the land. Sadly, he had also been blessed by the twelve fairies and lacked common sense.

He charged over the creaking drawbridge, through the crumbling courtyard, up the cracked marble stairway and straight into a wall of thorns.

"Ow ow ow ow!" he shrieked as his clothes and skin were shredded. "Don't worry, princess, these vines shall not stop me!"

He then drew his sword, leapt off his horse and proceeded to hack through the thick stems that blocked his path. Several minutes later, a bedraggled and sweaty prince limped up the many flights of stairs that led to the tower.

"Almost there... Almost there... Almost there..." he panted, picking the thorns out of his messy hair. "Imagine the wealth... Imagine the power..."

Then suddenly he had reached the top. He bent over to catch his breath and then proudly strode towards the bed of the princess, ignoring his many cuts and scratches and the repulsive stench that surrounded her. He was slightly startled when he noticed her grey skin and the way her face looked like someone had glued together a bunch of items from a compost bin, but assuming it was all part of the spell, he nevertheless leaned forward to break the curse.

Unfortunately, as the twelfth fairy had forgotten to mention that the princess wouldn't rot while she was sleeping, when their lips touched, a horde of maggots squirmed into the mouth of their new victim and the poor prince got infected through his wounds and died in the tower.

**Moral:** Use your common sense. Don't kiss corpses or trust strangers.
Twisted Fairy Tales: Blondie in the woods

By Henry Frazer

Our story begins in the snobbish part of town, where a rich, spoilt girl named Taylah lived with her rich, spoilt family and her rich, spoilt friends. Their suburb was positioned next to a fashionable wood, into which they would venture now and again to show off their new expensive toys or to have an expensive picnic bought from the local department store. Taylah was sometimes nicknamed Goldilocks, not because she had blonde hair (her hair was a more of a dull, mousy, brown), but because of her family’s immense wealth. One day, Goldilocks was attempting to scream the entire house down when she found out that they weren’t going to Paris for Christmas that year, they were going to New York instead. Her father, like many rich fathers do, tried to reason with her which quickly turned into bribery. However, Goldilocks was having none of it. Her eyes were set on her own horse, as well as an entire riding school to go with it. Such an enormous wish requires either an extremely nice and deluded father, or an extremely desperate one. She was vying for the latter. However, her father uncharacteristically got angry, and, for the first time in Goldilocks 12 perfect years of life, sent her to her room. She blinked at him once or twice, before screaming a couple more times for good measure. Then she abruptly burst into tears, screaming ‘I’ts not fair!’ to her dad and ran in the opposite direction to her room, which was coincidentally directly into the woods. She was quite a stupid girl, and after a while of running down the path, she panicked as she didn’t recognise where she was. Instead of following the path back home, however, she decided to be adventurous and walk directly into the shadowy part of the woods.

Now, to you and me this would be an exciting, if somewhat foolhardy adventure. But Goldilocks quickly tired of the fallen leaves that her designer shoes had to step through, and started sobbing again. Just as she was about to lie on the ground kicking and screaming, before taking out her mobile and calling a helicopter, she happened on a beautiful clearing. The grass was a lush green, dotted with daisies, and the sun shone down invitingly onto a little cottage in the centre. Immediately Goldilocks wanted it, so she stepped inside to inspect it before calling her dad. She loved the look of the windows, and the doors, and the wallpaper. Her squeals of delight would have been quite alarming for anyone nearby. As she stepped into the kitchen, Goldilocks spied three bowls of porridge set out on the table. Finding herself to be hungry, Goldilocks immediately sat down at the biggest bowl. You can’t blame her for being greedy. It was how she was raised. She lifted a spoon to her lips, but found it to be much too hot, so reluctantly she moved down to the second-largest bowl. This, she realised with disgust as she spat out a blob of porridge, was stone cold. So she finally tried the smallest bowl of porridge. Finding it to be covered in brown sugar and a whole assortment of nuts and fruits, she immediately tucked in. Before long though, she suddenly felt very itchy and a worrying rash spread across her entire body. She began to find it difficult to breath, and was calling loudly for help until three bears rushed in. They stared at the girl gasping on their kitchen floor for a moment, sharing a private look of disbelief, before the little bear said ‘Annie-fa-wax-is?’ The father bear immediately rushed into action, grabbing an epi-pen from the window-sill and stabbing it into her thigh. The mother bear had rung the ambulance, and although there was no road access a helicopter quickly arrived.

After recovering in hospital, Goldilocks reportedly sued the three bears for willfully harming her, and her father hired a specialist lawyer from Sydney. However, the three bears, who turned out just to be a middle-aged couple and their son who all had unfashionable haircuts, nailed Goldilocks on one account of trespass and three accounts of damaged porridge. Her family moved to Spain to ‘keep their little girl safe from the uncivilised’. Her father had also discovered a new tax-haven.

The three ‘bears’ were happy to settle for an impressive pay out, as well as the possession of Goldilocks’ old house.

THE END
Twisted Fairy Tales: Jack and the bean stalk

By Annie Burrows

Once upon a time there was a boy called Jack. Now Jack wasn't very smart, so when his grandmother asked him to do something she would always say, "and be quick about it or else I'll be dead by the time you get back!"

One day Jack was sent to sell their cow at the market, as he walked along looking at all the stalls he saw one that caught his eye: MAGIC BEANS read the sign, and on the counter there were three little green beans no bigger than a five cent piece.

"Would you like to by some magic beans?" Asked the man in the shop, as he had seen Jack inspecting his goods.

"I'm sorry, but all I have is this cow," Jack said sadly.

"No matter, I will just take your cow instead" replied the man. Jack agreed and was quickly on his way home. As he was walking Jack tripped and fell, the beans flew out of his hands and crash! They landed into a puddle. When Jack had finally regained his balance the ground began to shake and the puddle erupted, spraying water all over Jack. Once the air cleared Jack saw a towering green stalk rise above his head. He stepped back and thought for a while, then he proceeded to do what any teenage boy would do. He began to climb.

As he climbed higher and higher he saw the clouds and through those clouds a giant city, literally, along with the tipity-top of the stalk. But before Jack could reach the top he began to feel light headed, his foot slipped and he fell, dying from low oxygen levels not long after that. Because little boys were never meant to live in the sky.

Jack’s grandmother never did see her grandson again, but she didn’t really care. At least now she could go out and pursue her life long dream of running away and joining the circus.

The end.

Moral: think (logically) before you climb up a mysterious green stalk. Especially if it is a bean stalk.
101 word story: The Wizard

By Roland Wood

The magician whispered ancient words that have not been used for 10,000 years, he finished his sentence and a sudden clap of thunder filled the valley with echoes and light. It was music to the magician’s ears, and chilled him to the bone. It started to rain, a strike of lightning hit the bottom of the valley, setting a group of tree’s on fire and leaves twisting in the air. The fire hissed as it got wet from the rain. The magician descended from the cliff, at the bottom of the valley was the book, his book of never ending power.

101 word story: The Carnival

By Annie Burrows

The music from the carnival could be heard from miles away and the colourful dancing lights painted the night sky. Bright orange umbrellas marked out each store. The carnival was set out in a semi-circle and in the middle of this was a large stage. A girl was playing a violin, which must have been the source of the music. A circle of people gathered around a tiger in a cage. Lace ribbons fluttered in the breeze. A soft poem could be heard over the ruckus of the boisterous crowds. It was going to be an interesting night, full of fun.
Like to write, illustrate and work with us on the MAC student newspaper?

Contact as at: macstudentnews@mountalexandercollege.vic.edu.au