

Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Student Writing Genre of Choice



Inspired by Francis Upritchard: *Jealous Saboteurs* City Gallery Wellington, 2016

The Prophet

The land is still, taking a deep breath. I am watching, waiting, hoping. They approach the village one by one, and I know who they are looking for.

Me.

It is always me. It started at my birth- or a few days afterwards. Wrapped in the cloth that gave me a life; gave me a prison sentence. It is black and sweeping, with the gold of the Goddess blessed Aroa flower, and the colour cream of the people and the land. The black is for the night - the most sacred time when the Goddess goes walking and the Devil sleeps. They found me, they bought me in, certain the cloth was a sign from the Goddess.

Who are they this time? I am so tired but the Prophet never sleeps. She is always talking. I do not want to speak today, there is a white space behind my eyes where I can see nothing, but there is always someone in need. The men are wearing gold and riding fine horses; I know the type. They are little paper lords from a childish princeling who will believe what he wishes, but not what he sees. They come to kneel at my feet as a favour from the king, and then give me gold I do not need, in hopes I will safeguard their future.

I do hope they find solace. Although I doubt it will be with me.

Freya

Year 8

Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Part I - I Am Who I Am

Wind sprays in my auburn locks;
Why take it away from me?
You don't know who I am;
I threw away the key.

You are vicious, casting me out;
Like a stone flung into the river.
I will never forget;
I was never a forgiver.

You wonder who I am;
How did I end up here?
My past is dark;
Filled with broken hearts and fear.

I know what you do;
You are judging me.
I know what you say;
About the girl who wears the sea.

And yes, I bear it on my shoulders;
With my head held high.
And my heart beats to the waves;
Underneath the night sky.

Part II - The Lighthouse

My home is a small cottage;
Hidden deep in the wood;
It is small, lonely;
Matching my childhood.

But every night;
As the sun sets upon the hill.
I walk towards the cliff;
Sneaking past the windmill.

And down the stone steps;
To where the cliff ends;
Below me, the lighthouse stands;
And the shore extends.

The ocean is silent;
As my feet hit the sand.
Nothing escapes my lips;
This is my homeland.

So when I climb the winding stairs;
And turn the key;
The room is lit up;
And so is the sea.

Part III - Sundays

Every Sunday, there is a small market;
In the village square.
I buy fruit, herbs and spices;
As well as garments to wear.

I know I am not welcome;
The crowd before me turn their back.
Their faces are fearful, concerning;
Like I am about to attack.

I grit my teeth and move on;
And when I turn my head;
Above is a puppet stage;
And the curtains, velvet red.

I slowly walk towards it;
And the puppets dance before me.
On strings, they are captured;
And never to become free.

But suddenly, the strings snaps;
The puppet falls off the stage.
And if they can, I realise;
That I too can escape my cage.

Part IV - One Of A Kind

Ambling drearily along;
How could I have been such a fool?
The puppet was just a lifeless thing;
Buttoned eyes, foreboding and cruel.

I am used to that expression;
Watching me, wherever I go.
Cold, unforgiving, gazes;
They seem so long ago.

I remember those exact looks;
From when I was a child.
Staring at me with such intensity;
None of them ever smiled.

Befriending them was hopeless;
They thought me deranged, insane.
For all I knew, I could have been;
As the harshness began to stain.

Having a friend was an unknown feeling;
I never had anybody there;
Never felt the love;
Of somebody to talk to, somebody to care.

Part V - Escaping Myself

Remembering my parents;
Is extremely painful.
Ripping, tearing my heart;
The memory is baneful.

Of the night when my village;
Erupted in flames.
Nothing left but a handful of ash;
And the smouldering remains.

And I remember those orange tongues;
Destroying everything.
And my father, my mother;
Like those puppets on the string.

The fire teasing them , playing with them;
Letting them run, then blocking the path;
And they are trapped, pulling together;
Last breaths, and the flames wrath.

And just like that, they are gone;
But where was I?
Running, like they told me too;
Beneath the night sky.

Part VI - When They Came

And now I am here, in my home;
Staring at the door.
When it breaks, smashing;
And wood falls to the floor.

And they say I have to come;
I have been accused of witchcraft;
And associated with black magic;
When they say that, one laughs.

Because I am weak;
Frail, poor, and I am lead;
To the town; I'm not scared;
Death is not what I dread.

And now, I sit, in this cell;

Smelling of straw and iron bars.
And if I look out the small window;
I can see the stars.

Reminding me of days;
When my mother told me;
Of ocean spirits and dancing skies;
And I remember the sea.

Part VII - Holding On & Letting Go

They ask for any last wishes;
My one last request.
And as they lead me out onto the sands;
My heart pounds in my chest.

The rope is tied firmly;
Hanging from the frame.
And as I approach;
They light the flame.

After all, death is only a long sleep;
Only I will not waken;
But join the ocean;
My life, forsaken.

And I stare, long and hard;
At the lighthouse, on the slope.
The red and white stripes;
As they tighten the rope.

I smile for the first time;
Remembering the sea.
And as my eyes close;
I am finally free.

Megan
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

The Lone Wolf

The wind blew away her sorrow,
And whisked her thoughts into nothing.

Blue lips,
Pale face.

The urge for hope,
The need for love.

Her dress swayed in the breeze,
And the cold swept her up,
Into a dark, heartless place.

She couldn't think why,
They left her to die.

Left her in the Winter,
Covered in snow.

But where did they go?
Had they found their happy ever afters?
Or were they all starving on the streets?
She would never know.
Her dearest Mother,
And loving Father,
Had left her behind,
For something better?

She tried to think that
She could forgive and forget.

But forgiveness was long gone,
And hate had arrived.

She was a single wanderer,
A lone wolf.

She would wander ever mile,
Until they were found,
And murdered for their actions.

Young girl,
Small child,
Drowned in the sorrow.

She had changed,
And they would pay.

Her crossed fingers,
Symbolise revenge.

She wasn't a little girl anymore.
Mistakes and regrets didn't harm her.

When she reached them,
They would learn,
That leaving her was wrong.

Because the child in her,
Couldn't forget.

Steph
Year 7
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Roma takes a seat, eyes darting around the room. She appears withered - broken. It's not a surprise, though, after what she'd been through. Her face is sagging and incredibly wrinkled, one of the larger signs of old age. A dull, yet frightening appearance - to say the least. She opens her mouth, only to exhale.

"When I first saw Susan, at twelve, when she came to greet me with half a smile, I thought she was the kindest person I'd ever seen. She'd followed the village's strict guidelines, unlike others, and always had turned up for church. Her hair was always glossy, always loose. Clothing, her clothing, was much of the same - long, insulating, warm. Yes, cloak-like. And the piece of fabric - shawl? - that she would lie over her shoulders every day was almost eerie, woven from fabric of a colour that seemed somewhat swamplike. A bird's skull - small, the beak sharp - was all that kept her clothing from falling apart. How I didn't find her unnerving was, and still is, a mystery."

She closes her eyes and breathes in, the sound somewhat louder than her actual voice.

"Her posture was the worst I'd ever seen, and whenever she opened her mouth, crooked grey teeth were shown. She was disgusting in some ways, and graceful in others."

"What about when she first entered the village? Could you break down that moment?"

She's still silent. So am I.

"I could see her walking towards me, even from the gap in my family's shack. How she'd seen me, I didn't know. Witchery? Probably. All I knew at that moment was that she was coming, running, towards me, eyes locked on mine. Her cloak, despite its length, wasn't being dragged through the dust at all. She appeared to be hovering above the ground - only slightly, incredibly unnoticeable. But as she was floating towards me, I captured every detail. My eyes scanned her, from her feet to her eyes. By then, I'd no time to take in her appearance. I had to bite my hand just to prevent myself from screaming."

"Why? What had-"

"Her irises,"

She shivers, shaking her head and drawing her face closer to mine.

"They were red. Bright near the black center, with a dark outline at the edges. A true sign of the devil. And there she was, moving closer. Closer, closer, closer. My back was to the wall, and my hand was going pink. Red liquid dripped from the teeth marks. I was too distracted to see her eye staring at me through the crack in the timber. A tiny, sharp yellow object passed through the wood, right next to me, and she yelped. Her eyes, the red ones, morphed into a warm blue. The hair stood up on the back of my neck. How did that happen? Why then? Again, too distracted by my own thoughts to notice that she was, somehow, sitting next to me, breathing into my ear."

She begins speaking in a high, raspy voice, of which I assume is Susan's.

"Are you okay, my child? You're bleeding. She rubbed my cut, spreading the blood over my hand. Smiling as she was doing it. Back then, it seemed friendly. More friendly, so she invited me into her house. Being the ignorant child I was, I followed her. It was a stupid, stupid decision."

Roma pauses, pulling her pale face into a frown that's barely noticeable underneath her face's many creases.

"I stayed for a day with her watching over me. She fed me each day, three times, meals that eventually made me feel, and look, human within little more than a week. Days that I stayed in her care slowly turned into months. I broke my arm once. Fell off one of the trees that bordered her property. It healed two days after I injured myself. Susan did it. She wasn't mortal - perhaps she was even the shadow of a mortal, and I was a hundred times that. A child, useless. But she helped me. Cared for me. She could've healed kings, artists, maybe bishops, if she could find one. But she healed me. Over and over again. She had a magical touch, a healing touch. I wished to be like her, to have fingers as such. To travel the world, healing those that were in need, being greeted with a banquet at each palace I visited."

I interrupt. "What happened when you were with her? How did she change into the abusive human you've so often described her as?"

"It was slow. As I've said, I wanted to be like her. I woke up in the middle of the night once to ask her what I had to do. Instead of being greeted by silence, I was greeted by shouts. Two people. Susan and the butcher. Outside, with the moonlight as my torch, I got a better view of the situation. He was limping away from the house. Rushing towards her gate. She smiled from the doorway, broken vase in hand. It was dark, with a large, primrose yellow flower covering most of the surface. Dark liquid dripped from the sharper edges. The butcher's blood. He was dying, but Susan wouldn't have hurt him. If she had hurt people, why hadn't she hurt me? It wasn't an attack. Susan had vases of flowers, and the butcher had fallen onto one and Susan

had picked it up and she was smiling, not because he was in pain, but because he had told a joke about the chickens that were pecking at the grass seeds in the corner of her garden. The uneasiness that I'd felt before was gone, replaced by a feeling of warmth. I skipped up the steps to Susan's deck, smiling. She was smiling too, and the vase was gone. Her drink had been spilt onto the wood underneath me. It smelled like metal. *Oh, my dear child, come in! I have a gift for you!* She took me by the shoulder and pushed me into the living room. The rooms had a sudden largeness, and so did Susan. She stood tall above me, looking down with only one eye. This time, they were blue. In her hand, she had a bag of liquid. It was dripping onto her grey carpet. She didn't notice."

Her eyes are heavy, half closed.

"In the other hand was a knife. It was made of bone. Didn't she know that silver was now what most utensils were made of? Most of the time, they were slightly blunt, too- *This is yours*, she said, handing me the knife. I took it, my hand weighed down instantly. Out of the bag, she brought a baby. I screamed. Louder than ever. Before this, she had made me do strange things - speak in gibberish alongside her while covered by black cloth. She made me slice part of my hand off once. I still have the scar."

She signals to her left palm.

"The baby was alive, still breathing. It looked like it had only just been born. Could I kill a baby? No! I yelled the word at her. She glared at me. *I healed you! I weakened myself to make you stronger! If you don't do it, I'll do it myself!* Her eyes morphed into the screaming red and she swept the baby from the table. I screamed, too. **(Her own voice)** *Let it go! Let it go! It's just a baby!* It cried. Loudly. Susan grabbed her lamp and began beating me with it. Someone knocked at the door for about a second. They heard nothing. The windows were too thick, walls too strong. I ran towards them, blood gushing out of my arm. Susan swiped at me with the knife she'd given to me. **(Susan's voice, shouting)** *You are a waste!* **(The stranger's voice)** *Anyone home?* I screamed yes. **(Her voice)** *Yes, Yes! Help me!* Susan lunged for me with the same knife she'd gifted me, and stabbed me near my stomach. Her eyes grew purple. During the months I'd spent at Susan's house, I'd never seen her irises become purple."

Roma clears her throat.

"She knew that the crimes she'd committed would lead to her death, and that killing me would send the stranger running - running with information that was far more valuable than my life."

She pauses.

"Susan began rubbing my wounds, spreading the ever-increasing amount of blood around both my arm - and my stomach. She was angry, and took something out of her pocket, stuffing it into my mouth. I almost choked on it. The stranger was inside. He screamed, which made Susan jump. She scrambled up her stairs, eyes blue again. I was being picked up by the stranger, and he was running out the gate. All the way to the small pharmacy, I flapped in the wind like an empty skin. A bug got itself trapped in the half-closed, no longer bleeding cut on my arm. It stung. The pharmacist called someone from behind the counter. They took me from the stranger, and the next day, I could move."

"And Susan?"

"The village had linked most disappearances to her. The baby. A group of children, each barely ten years old. Three schoolteachers. Eight tourists - and me, although none admitted to noticing."

A tear slides down her cheek. Roma wipes it away and clears her throat once more.

"We had a vote on her punishment. Everyone over thirteen. That was it. Tiny slips of paper, each folded neatly across the middle. The majority voted to burn her, but we weren't primitives. Shooting her was our final decision. It was a fast death, and as we had decided, a far more humane punishment. A party of ten made their way to her house an hour after our decision, armed with more guns than any in our village had ever seen."

She stands up from her stool.

"They never found her."

Pia

Year 7

Raroa Normal intermediate School

She'd Always Hated Lying

A communication horn crackled to life outside.

"All families in Accommodation 17 outside. No exceptions!" a voice barked. Susanna let out a sob, and looked at her children. A girl of 11, with her mother's hair, drawing in the dust. a boy of seven, curled in a corner like a caterpillar in a cocoon. A child of three, clinging to her mother.

"I can't let them take you away... I can't..." she cried, gathering them close. She'd always hated lying.

"All families outside! Now!"

Susanna looked about the small room; the walls were covered in dusty drawings, and stick dolls littered the dirt floor. There were four sleeping platforms around the walls, though there were no blankets. A barren prison.

Susanna looked at the room. There were four sleeping platforms, varying in length. . She couldn't make it three.

She pointed to the sleeping platforms.

"Vanessa! Under there, now!" She bundled her daughter up, and hid her under a sleeping platform.

"Now, don't make any noise!" she pulled her two others out by the hand, and hissed, "Be quiet, and don't say a word about Vanessa!"

A man in a warm coat strode along the length of small huts. Susanna prayed he would pass them by. Anyone but her children.

The man came to stop in front of them, leering at Susanna, and the two children with her.

"These your only kids? We were told you had three." he peered at her. "You haven't hid one, have you? Filthy cheating slave scum like you." He talked like they were nothing more than filthy dogs, cattle to be harvested.

Susanna gulped. The children cowered behind her. The moment seemed to slow.

“No, sir.”

Her crossed fingers rested, concealed behind her back. She'd always hated lying, after all.

Rebecca

Year 8

Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Lone Soul

Lonely,
I wander, thoughtless.
Dry eyes;
Losing sanity each step I take,
Until I am lost
Soul shredded
Lonely.

Sun setting
Tall, majestic trees shadows growing longer
I notice not;
Tugging my wheel barrow
Like a dead weight.
I am lost
Lonely.

Through the village;
Glances,
Whispered words,
I am different
No one understands
I am broken
Lonely.

I reach my shack;
Familiar walls,
Walls with many a dent,

Cobwebs

It has no need to be locked

What is there to steal?

Lonely.

Approaching the door;

Memories,

So many memories

To hold your hand once again

To cradle you close,

Oh what I would do for that.

What *would* I do?

Lonely.

Reaching out,

Pleading.

And I can see it

I can see you

Standing there.

I miss you.

Please.

Loved?

Trembling hands

Fumbling fingers

I reach.

You are so close.

So, so close.

Yet so far.

I pull

The door opens

And...

I am plunged into my own sorrow

Alone

Again.

Lonely.

Niamh
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Agarlia

Agarlia. Ironic, the definition meaning 'dark beauty'. She wasn't beautiful at all. Don't tell that to her face though. She will slaughter you. She had no surname. Simply a name she had given herself. Her place of 'residence' being an old house with creaky floors, cracked windows, mouldy lace curtains, and several cobwebs. There was a second floor, but if you were to break in, you didn't dare climb the staircase. It was an ascending staircase to hell.

Agarlia had dark shaggy hair, long beak nose, mouth slightly parted ready to engulf the souls that dare to break free. Her hands steady, controlling the mind, and the heartbeat of those that lay kidnapped. One false move from them and SNAP! Dead. Very faint eyebrows, lack of protection against her sweat dripping down. Not that she produced any, she was not very active. Just sitting there, controlling the lives of innocent victims. Guilty in her eyes, she always had a different perspective of things to everyone else. Half of her body green, as if half human, half alien. She would always know how to make you jump with fright, unpredictable she was. Skinny from lack of nutrition, only drinking polluted water, and the metallic blood of her kills. As for food... she was not a vegetarian.

She had no relation to anyone whatsoever. No friends, family, or even enemies. She was seen as a murderer, and the only one to look for if you wanted hope.

All enemies she developed were very short term. They were to disappear forever. The only other association she had forever was her mind. Forever sending signals in and out, making life or death situations. Old, however not wise, except those under

her command were forced to look up on her as a leader, as someone they should worship for dear life.

If she were to move, it would be a slow crawl, eyes slightly open, mouth parted even more, focused on what she was after. Her eyes would widen more and more as she approached closer and closer. Eventually, she would come face to face with her target, looking them dead in the eye. Put this straight as an offending human. She would tower over them, though still on her hands and knees, forcing her

target to shuffle backwards, only to run into a slimy wall, covered in thick cobwebs. They would be forced to shut their eyes, to block out the sight of Agarlia. There was still a sense of her presence, her presence only an inch away from you. And as you slowly take a peek, it is the last thing you ever see. Her mangled body with her mouth open wide, her eyes as black and open as they will ever go. Her power the most strong ever.

And then you see eternal blackness.

Stella
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

THEIR TOMBS AMONG THE SAND

Baghdad, Persia 1050 ad.

The desert is an ocean, filled with creatures and locations, many of different colours and sizes. There are a vast array of settlements in this bluster of heat and mountains of sand. Amongst it, there is a city. A proud and prosperous city. Through the city runs the Tigris River. This river has brought hope to the people. It was their saviour.

I get out of bed. Another sleepless night, another night alone. I light a fire, before heading outside to gather food. The fire isn't warm, but it is good enough. I don't shiver, even in the deadly chill of night. First gather, then pray. I am used to this by now. My body will slip into a routine soon.

Kneeling in front of the fire, I mouth a silent prayer. Even alone I don't speak. A vow was taken and I won't break it. After all these years it is still as silent as ever. Sabirah loved singing, and I would sometimes join her. She doesn't sing anymore. I don't either.

The roof has a crack in it. I will have to fix it someday. It's all the little things that matter. I have considered this many times. If I had recognised all the little things, things would be different. Oh so different.

A craftsman shouts a greeting of welcome as he enters. I know what it feels like, going from door to door, trying to make a living. He enquires about products whether I want to buy or not, in an enthusiastic, bumbling manner. He offers

me a clay pot, but I shake my head. I have no need for this. The craftsman soon leaves, obviously disappointed. He will sell it eventually. They always do.

The sun is despicable at this time of year. There is nowhere to hide from it. My head is hot from the cloth wrapped around, but I dare not take it off.

I can just see the silhouette of the hills through the door. They are right there, faces flashing in front of my eyes. I see myself, etched in a dull black and white. The others, however, are in vivid colour. The hills slip from my view as my head hits the floor.

Is this real? A beautiful woman stands in front of me. Sabirah. She left me, too soon. Why is she here? How...

"It was my fault." My fault, my fault. I know it. Have known it for 20 crippling years. My own father, my flesh and blood, shattered my spirit and body, my necessity gone in the blink of an eye. Now it has returned.

I do not speak to her. I, can't. Words are a foreign concept to me now. Could I even do it again? Speaking is a skill to master, like everything else.

Yet it may be harder to learn again. Still, it was done for her. All of this, my whole life, was done for her.

I lived for her. Now I suffer. For love...

I think back to the last day of my life, well, so to speak. I had done my rounds around the town and had returned to our house on the south-east of the city. The sun had been fairly mellow that day, a refreshing change.

It had been a good day for me, making lots of sales. It was too good to last...

As I entered the house, I was knocked to the ground, by armed guards. They went straight for her and my son. I was unarmed, but threw myself at them. Thrown back, I went again. I was obviously outmatched, but I had to do something, give them a chance. I didn't see it. Knocked unconscious probably. I saw the bodies though, as they dragged them away.

I suddenly remember that she's still there. She hasn't said anything, just stared. She's probably not impressed with me. I wouldn't be. I just stare straight through her, like the surface of a lake. The silence is unlike any I have experienced. We both want to talk, but have both been silent for so long.

"It wasn't your fault." The words whisper out, like a breath of mist.

I'm rooted to the spot. "It was," I think.

She shakes her head.

"No"

"NO", more forcefully this time.

My throat is burning, my stomach compressing in.

How long since I ate or drank. Not a problem usually.

...

She looks me over. My skin feels cold, despite the heat outside.

"Not you."

I don't understand. I was the one who could have protected her. Even by being with her, I was endangering her and my son. I shouldn't have been with her in the first place. She would have a longer and much more plentiful life without me. If I had just listened to him.

She shakes her head again.

"You are different from your father."

I was like my father, wasn't I? Consumed by a life of solitude, with few friends, many enemies. We may have forged different paths in life, but we are not that different. We are still family.

She looks at me sadly one last time.

"Why?"

That hits me hard.

Why all this? Why this pain?

Why?

Why?

Why?

I turn to her.

"Thank you."

The words spill out my mouth. For the first time in forever, my silence is broken.

Tarek

Year 8

The Shadow

I knew the tales. He lives in the woods, watching you, and he will get you you don't eat your vegetables. I never used to believe them, until I saw him. Then, my room became my study.

Pinboards with string, both literally and metaphorically trying to tie ends together, to make the tales make sense. They didn't. The only thing they had in common, a man, blue wool, and an old caravan. I read police reports, I asked the council, the mayor, and anyone that I could. No one could give me anything helpful. Then, a vital piece fell into place. I found a location. Still no name, no age, nothing else.

Every week on Thursday, I walked to the florists and waited through their opening hours. But there was nothing to be seen, anywhere near the shop from 10 till 7. Almost as if he knew. As if he knew I was watching. Waiting.

It was 12:47 on the 7 of January 1999. The first Thursday of the year. There was no one on the streets, and the rain took it upon itself to make the scene all the more miserable. A car drove past, splashing me with a wall of scummy water. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a shadow against a building. As if out of nowhere, he appeared. Large glasses covered his eyes, casting shadows across his angled face, hiding his expression. Blue shapeless wool draped over his shoulders reached to his feet, filling out a skeletal frame. Just like the tales.

The hairs on the back of my neck stood up. He walked quickly, silently, almost gliding over the pavement. Silent. Disconcerting. Foreign. Foreign was not quite the word, no. Alien. He was Alien. He was in and out of the florist in thirty seconds precisely. He had appeared not to have bought anything, which was strange. He walked away, and I followed him. Out of the city, the cars splashing us and the rain pouring down. But when I was drenched, he was still dry. We walked to a deserted trailer park, overgrown, rusty. Creepy.

The one remaining trailer stood watching him approach. Dark. Hungry. Shutters down, door locked with chains and padlocks. With a wave of his hand, they dropped. This should have been my first clue, my first warning, but I followed him.

He left the door open as if he knew I was following him. My second clue, he had not turned around once. I lost sight of him in the black of his trailer. But I still crept towards the door. Foreboding. Dread. Three stairs to the door. First step. Second step. Third step. The inside is black a shadow, as night, as nothing. I had never known such a color. My third clue. I stepped in, feeling blind. Panic gripped me. Fear. Terror. I tried to turn around to the door. To leave. But there was no light. None. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't move. I wanted to scream, to run, but there was nothing I could do. I had made a terrible mistake.

Holly I
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

A shattered frame of society buzzes through the crowded streets. I weave my way across the fractured city. Running, always running. Figures turn to blurs as they hurry past me, past my invisible silhouette. No one sees, no one cares. All I have are colours to give, but they only want grey.

They bumble their way through a busy life speaking a common language. They always want more and yet they already take such incredible talent for granted. If I ever once had the opportunity to communicate with the world, I would have treasured such a gift.

But as each day rolls by, I slowly start to accept that I am an unknown. And unless they wish to learn, I remain a creature trapped in an alien world. I pull myself from the ground and drag each limb behind me. Running, crawling. Each body part, heavier and heavier. The day starts to fade and I begin to grow weak. Sunlight is replaced with the harsh glow of the moon as the night settles into place.

And yet again, I surrender another day and the search for a place of asylum begins.

I cocoon myself within the warmth of my arms, letting the familiar feeling of only my own company overwhelm me. I give in to my flaws and put my hopes of acceptance to rest.

Felicity
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

The thing about lies, they always catch up with you... Trust me, I would know. Sometimes a gift can be a curse.

The man knelt in front of me, his eyes full of eager curiosity. His hands face up on the table, I set my palms on top of his. I shut my eyes and tried to concentrate, which was difficult with the ruckus of

everyday life outside. In the past few years I found out about my gift. At first it was amazing. Everybody saw me as a talented young woman. They still do. But seeing the future comes with downs.

A vision flashed in my head. Darkness, all I could see. A feeling that I have never felt before joined the party of emotions in my head.

Fear...

I opened my eyes, my hands broke away.

"What is it?" the man asked. My breathing had deepened, fists clenched the tables, my knuckles white as paper.

"Nothing, everything's fine," I stood up, my chair flew away from the table. I ran to the door, grabbing my coat on the way out.

Disappearing into the crowd, the man ran out after me.

"Wait!"

But I would not. He needed not to know, if he did... No, don't think about it.

Joshua

Year 7

Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Sleep is comforting today. So I sink into it with ease, glad for the sip of relaxation after my travels.

Disorientated after a dreamless sleep, I drink in the dark outlines of shapes, recognizing them as my few belongings. A familiar sensation crawls through my body as my skin color recreates a new days pattern of emotions. Subcontionsiously organising a daily routine I swing out of my hammock to place my feet on the rough uncarpeted floor. My nose draws me to the ajar window. Peeping through the grating at the early risers, I drink in the warm light of Jackapones young sun.

Mixed authentic spices waft throughout the village as everyone prepares for the annual celebrations. Stepping out of my lifeless shack, eyes are drawn to my distinctly different robes, although quickly lowered in respect. My deep lips softly hum a tune of spiritual thanks for the safety of my temporary home. Wandering through the crowds of villagers I notice, everyone is smiling.

I think forward to the celebrations and a weight of responsibility settles on my shoulders.

It's my turn to preach.

Tesca

Year 8

Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Lurking, shadowing footstep for footstep.
Fingers outstretched, swiftly picking up a chain of gold.
"This could be worth millions," he thought,
a grin wiped across his scrawny face.

Picking up pace, he darted toward the swarm of bodies.
Squeals of panic drowned away the joy swelling up in his body.
"T-that man..."
Glancing over, just to realize it was a grave mistake.
"There!" a female voice screeched, one he could not
Recognize.

Panic flooded his body.
Breaking into a sprint.
Walls surrounding his every escape.
Was this the end?
Hope, drifting away.
Footsteps trailed closer.
Blackness.
Voices echoed across empty terrain.
Nowhere to run.
Blackness was the only company he would ever have
again.
Light glared into his pink fabric, blinding him.
Head slammed against the wooden bench.
Straped, barely conscious.
There was no escape.
Not this time.

Death was upon him.

Kendra

Year 8

Raroa Normal Intermediate School

The Lady You Never Noticed

Ash falling, falling on her face like snow.
Emotions dancing across her face,
No secrecy.
But her emotions are foreign,
Unreadable,
Ancient runes she tatoos over her face.
Understanding, we can't understand her.
And that is what pushed her over the edge.

She is beautiful.
Black hair to contrast her pale skin.
Green eyes, guarded.
She is bright, bold;
But she blends in, almost a shadow in the crowd.
Though everyone knows she's there.
She did not choose to be so,
We pushed her to that point.
When no one wants you, you start to fade away,
However bold you may be.

You know the lady I speak off,
The one who sits, who sits so still.
Oh, so still.
She is peaceful; we are not,
She is pure; we are tainted.
Watching us from closed eyes, she sees.
She knows,
She cares.

But if we, the human race, are anything,
We are selfish.
Watching as she starves, from the comfort of our homes.
Watching as she heals,
But we don't really see.

We don't really know.
And we have never cared.

But she is strong, stronger than her frail body gives away,
Everyone else is weak.
But holding the weight of the world is a task divine enough for no one alone.
So she stops.
So she falls
Finally free.
But all freedom must come with a price;
And all prices must be paid.

So she shatters.

And then we notice.

Hana
Year 7
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Mandrake

He sits.
He sits in his lair,
Face grinning at the floor,
Patchwork colours shrouded in darkness.

He watches.
He watches the monitors in front of him,
Showing the pain and suffering he causes,
As people die,
As people fight,
As people try as they might,
As people show fear as everything crumbles around them.

He watches as people try to find him,
Scouring the entire planet to root him out,
But where they are searching, he knows they'll never find him.

One would expect remorse,

But he thrives in this position,
Watching as he makes everyone suffer,
Suffer for his own amusement.
Or, to be precise, *revenge*.

His maniacal laugh echoes throughout his entire mind.

Ryan
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Norway, 1865

The fire. The burning. The death. It had found her. And now it was going to kill her.

She had felt it the day before, in the distance; the heat just at the edges of her mind. But today. Today the heat was all-consuming in her thoughts. But it couldn't drown out the screams for help. From her brethren, her family. They were being slaughtered. And she couldn't help.

Looking from her vantage point high in the trees, she could see for acres in all directions. To the south she could see great expanses of forest, and past that, the river Söråsjön, stretching out across the land. But in the distance, the very distance, she could see it. The tell-tale signs of destruction headed towards her. The red glow, faint, but noticable on the horizon.

Norway, 1866

She could tell, from the way the trees bent easily in the wind, from the way the wind carried itself, that they were gone. Her brethren were gone. Hundreds of thousands of trees, now ash in the wind. She was the last one. The last Dryad

She stood on the bank of the river, gazing over the flames wreathing the forest on the other side, knowing that somehow, eventually, the flames would make it across, and she would be consumed. The last hope, if you could call her that, for humanity, for the earth, would be gone, and the world would descend into ash.

They had come. They had found her. However much she ran, they ran faster. However well she hid, they sought better. Whoever she got to help, they had better. Whatever she did, no matter how she

did it, they did it better, and now it was useless. There was no point in running.

Norway, 1867

Her forest, her family was burning. She was burning. Everything was burning. The world was burning. The bright yellow fire, the unending fire. It was here, and it would take all;

From the distance, the fire looked peaceful, and only a faint crackling could be heard, but up close the ever-blazing fire was a hellstorm of heat, unbearable heat, and roaring so loud there is nothing else. The fire, it would seem, consumes everything in its path, leaving nothing behind.

But, from the deserted wasteland, the barren ash, life rises. One tree, the phoenix tree. And life began anew.

Hal
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Maia

Aliya always tries to tell me that people change, and things get better; that nothing lasts forever. Sometimes, I like to believe her; to let her thoughts wash over me like a blanket, a small patch of heat, stitched together with impossibly thin thread. I let her keep me warm. And yes, I adore these blankets, these stories, these tales.

Yet watching her spin them is painful. It hurts, it aches, a repetitive feeling of agony which pulls and whines and only struggles for air when I push it down, because she wants me to be happy. But she is only trying to fog out my thoughts with a sugar-spun solution which simply isn't helping me, it's only helping her hurt herself. She's always been good at doing that. Twisting my 'pessimistic' philosophies. Contorting them into misshapen masterpieces; fictional creatures reminiscent of the distorted shadows climbing my damp walls.

I stare at them blankly, barely blinking. A cold stare, empty eyes falling into their unfathomable silhouettes. I wonder if they can sense my unhappiness. They almost seem sad themselves. Beginning to fade helplessly with the first strokes of light gracing the darkness.

Ruby
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

I loved Arcane. She was the one in the forest, the magical healer. She wasn't given enough credit. Her healing properties were amazing.

No, she was not a witch, but her talents were good enough to pass for magical. She was only in her late teens when I first met Arcane, but already wrinkles lined her face, around her unseeing eyes and non-smiling mouth.

I was greatly fascinated by her before I even saw her. After moving into the Amazonian village, the kindly villagers told me quite a big deal about her. But no-one ever mentioned her name, not even mouthed it. The curse - something like 'to say the *her* name is to condemn your family and endless generations to eternal bad luck', was one thing I never believed. I repeated her name profusely. I had no family to worry about, and for the matter of future generations, I had no-one to curse but myself and I did not intend to have any children or husband. The villagers thought me queer and outlandish, to carelessly throw her name about in my mouth like small children throw their toys, but truth to be told, I wasn't interested in what they thought of me. I only minded what Arcane thought.

When I met Arcane for the first time, I was in awe. Her head snapped towards me as I walked down the worn path towards her cabin. It was as though she could see me as clear as anything, but I know now she used her superfine hearing and the feeling that someone was watching her. Her voice croaked out towards me and I have to say, I didn't expect it in the least. It was low, scratchy, like sandpaper drawing across a blackboard.

I remember I took a few steps towards her, fascinated and slightly horrified, and she suddenly rose.

"Walk no further, stranger," she snapped. "You have the smell of a female. You are a liar. Your walk is masking fear."

"A-Arcane," I stammered. That made her start, give a little snuffle and, if I remember correctly, stumble back a few steps.

"You dare speak my name," she mumbled, suddenly looking unsure.

"You are different. You are a liar. I smell blood on you. What injury do you bring to me?"

She then drew herself back up. She was back in control.

"I have a gash, on my lower thigh, and it is bleeding but does not hurt," I explained.

It was a self-inflicted injury, so I would be able to meet the famed Arcane. I was impatient and young. Though, mind you, Arcane and I were around the same age when we met.

"Please help me. Arcane." I added, gauging her reaction carefully.

Her eyelids flickered, showing the white nothingness beneath, then she came towards me as if she had perfect vision. Her hands then fell on my thigh,

sending sharp shocks of pain to my head. I stumbled and she grabbed my arm, not roughly, but again not gently.

“Come into...”

I remember she never completed the sentence, just dragged me into the cabin and made me lie on the soft bark floor.

Her hands felt the injury and she sat back on her heels, her head tilted somewhere north of my eyes.

“You are a liar,” she repeated, and as I think back now it was probably obvious I had cut myself. “You come here wanting me to heal you. You say my name when no one has said it before but myself. You are a liar! You are wasting my time!”

Her face was still serenely peaceful, despite the harsh words spilling out of her throat.

“I’m sorry, Arcane,” I mumbled. The loss of blood was making my head woozy. “Fix it, please, I mean you no harm.”

Still she sat there, not touching me, only hanging her head.

“You mean harm, you do,” she snapped suddenly. “You think I am something to be studied and marvelled at. You come here and you cut yourself to meet me. I will dress the wound but I will do no further.”

And I was thoroughly dismissed. I remember she dressed my cut efficiently with sharp instructions to come back to get it redressed, then sat down and took on a dreamlike state, calmly meditating. I crept out of the door, trying not to bother her, until she barked, “Close the door, liar.”

I closed it and left. It took me a month or so to go back, I remember, and this time I did not fake an injury. I had no injury, no cover story, nothing at all but earnest curiosity and wonder. Said simply, Arcane was my idol.

On that second visit, she let me in, face twisted into a scowl, spitting and hissing like a wild animal.

“You come again, liar,” she had spat, wrenching bark from the spider-thread strings hanging above her doorway.

She stuffed them in a jar with alarming fury. Her lip quivered suddenly.

“Why do you come?”

Her voice was suddenly soft, curious. I remember quite clearly how she turned to face me, in her hands the jar of bark.

“I...I don’t know.”

I surprised myself by speaking the pure, plain truth. “I suppose...you seem lonely...do you want some, uh...?” I fished desperately for the right word, and when coming back to the surface empty-handed, finished lamely,

“...company?”

Flicking back the blue-and-green scarf she always donned, the hardened shell forming itself once again around her feelings, she turned her back to me with what I dare say was scorn.

“I don’t need company, liar,” she barked.

It was funny, I guess, how she had so clearly ‘barked’ the words and also was indeed holding bark in her hands.

I persisted that day, suggesting all sorts of annoying but helpful things to do with her until she relented. The villagers flocked around her cabin that day because of the recent scorching sun and lack of effective sunblock. Thinking back, she probably did enjoy my company and extra pair of helping hands.

That night we talked. Meaningless things, like a Q & A, me being the nosy interviewer and her the willing celebrity. Her manner was unguarded, gentle even, as she chatted amiably. She clammed up when I edged towards questions about her past and she very obviously guided me back.

That was how Arcane and I formed a fragile, needle-thin bond. Every day, when I could, I talked and helped and laughed with her. Her smile was sweet, a little arc of her true soul. The villagers shunned me, disgusted and slightly awed as Arcane began to talk to me freely.

She started conversations with ease and giggled like any other young mid-twenties girl. I learned to love her, to care for her and worry about her. In my isolation from the villagers, she quickly became my best friend.

After about two months maybe, she began to say things that obviously meant a lot to her, like her past and her mother. I listened, tears swelling in sympathy, and negotiated by baring my secrets. I knew I could trust her with my life. She told me stories about herself that I will not state in this, as I promised to never utter a word of them.

For those Amazonian villagers who are still living there in their small, sheltered world, remember the old witch healer who died in her cabin. I think Arcane was truly a peaceful, kind woman. I remember as clear as day how she died, suddenly and peacefully, the sentence dying from her lips as she suddenly slumped back, blind milky eyes staring upwards. I grasped her hand, and then I felt a sensation, a dying, a *passing* - and I knew my great friend Arcane was gone to join her mother. I missed her.

To this day I still sorely miss her.

This is my legacy to her, my tribute to her soul. Though her body rests in the dark earth beneath her cabin, her soul is forever at peace.

Katie
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Who am I ?

**I lived in a place of barren outback and Arnhem land. Alawan song
and indigenous firedance.
Aboriginal Australia.**

**I felt happy there. Home. Song and Dance litter my memories,
but I was confused, confused about what I wanted, what I believed.
I felt out of place, an otter in a pig farm**

I spoke of my discomfort.

**I saw his kaleidoscope eyes, I was young. He frightened me. My
ambitions were not what he wanted.**

**The mug crashed to the ground, words were thrown at me in a
violent whirlwind,
I had expected this reaction, but I didn't wish for it.**

I left the Alawan Land. Home.

The girl of cheeky corkscrews and sun kissed charcoal was gone.

Gone.

...

Who am I ?

**I am a mockingbird, I dance to the song of my life. It may not be
pretty, but it's mine.**

**Some may perceive me as a distorted figure, torn in half by my
own spiritual beliefs.**

**Well I say they're right. Actually I can't say, because I don't speak.
I am silent, confining my thoughts to myself, I like it that way.**

My notions may define me, but they don't lead me.

I am a blank canvas. Yet to be subject to a motive.

I am sagacious in my own way.

I am vulnerable.

I am a prophet, maybe, maybe not.

I am alone, I like it that way.

Aboriginal blood runs through my veins.

**I have my beliefs,
I fought for them but was it right to hurt the people I care for in
order to gain my freedom ?**

Who am I ?

What defines me ?

...

My past defines me, I define me.

Chris

Year 8

Raroa Normal Intermediate

The sky bled red as darkness began to steal what was left of the daylight. Warm colours flooded the sky, overtaking the blue, as clouds gathered, bidding the sun farewell. Beneath the crowded skies, Heidi ambled along the path, as the melody created by the gentle crashing waves became louder.

Resting on her nose, Heidi's classy round sunglasses hid the eyes that once contained so much sorrow. She walked elegantly, yet without a hint of joy in her movement, as her white cane tapped the path in front of her, checking for any obstacles in her way. Not expecting anyone to be out at this hour, Heidi was startled at the sudden thump

when she bumped into some passers-by. They quickly apologised, and made way for her as if she were royalty, giving Heidi the pleasure of feeling power. One woman directed a smile at Heidi, but quickly realised her mistake, and carried on down the path, parting ways with Heidi. After that, there was no one in sight for miles.

Heidi stepped down from the pavement into her all-too-familiar surroundings, the sand beginning to drown her feet, breaking the even surface. Dragging her dull purple cloak behind her, she wrapped it further around her body, shielding herself from the delicate but icy breeze.

Heidi bent down, and began scooping up the sand, shoving it into one huge pile. Waves charged towards Heidi, as she walked with a half broken bucket she had found lying on the beach after she accidentally wedged her cane in between one of the cracks. Stooping down to the water, Heidi filled the bucket, and made her way back, as seawater leaked out, trailing behind her. She tipped the bucket over, and began pressing down firmly, compacting the mountain of sand. Using only her hands to mold the sand, and her sharp nails for the precise details, she began the sculpting process. Heidi's hands felt what she couldn't see. The sculpture began to take shape.

Darkness now blanketed the town, matching her short hair. As the sun disappeared, Heidi continued. Time expired and hours were spent etching patterns, until the perfected sculpture was finished. Heidi stood up. She ran her fingers over the carefully carved designs, feeling the huge features of a face. The eyes and nose of the sculpture were out of place, almost purposefully. The cracks in the artwork outlined puzzle pieces that divided the face. Satisfied, she stood back, embracing her surroundings. Salty air filled her lungs while her cloak flew about in the whistling wind. Remaining still beneath the serene stars, Heidi's mouth began to curve, forming a smile that had been untouched for all-too-long.

Sofia
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Amongst his weathered clothes and straggly hair, his fragile frame lays undisturbed hidden underneath all her other abandoned items. Layers of dust now blanket him growing thicker day after day. As he hears her disconcerting laughter through the closed doors, the sound that was once music to his ears now just a hurtful reminder, it dawns on him the mysterious reason she decided to replace him. Leaving him introverted and confused.

He used to have a wise side of him but that seems to have slowly dissolved over what feels like months of neglect. His humbleness is what keeps him going, pushing on through his dark days.

A creak interrupts his thoughts as a stream of light blinds him. Looking up, familiar baby blue eyes stare down at him accompanied by a bulging pair he did not recognise.

"What's that?" says an unfamiliar husky voice, pointing down at a slump doll resting in the midst of other unwanted items.

"Just an old doll," she says grabbing something from the shelf.

A creak interrupts the silence, sending him back into darkness again.

Carly

Year 8

Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Black and Yellow

The entire tribe swayed to Cashile's warbling. Standing in front of her people, she sang, swung her herbs and waved her sceptre. The tribe looked upon her with awe. She was in her element, commanding her people, doing the job she was made to do.

Her face, normally so cold and expressionless, was serene, made up in the colours of red and yellow. The dress that she never took off was swaying in the wind she was summoning. She stepped down from her stage, easily mistaken for a Queen descending from her throne, slowly walking toward the sacrificial cow tied in the the centre of the crowd.

Bare feet kicking up sand, Cashile advanced. It was time for the new year offering. She picked up the herbs, she had collected earlier, from around her waist. Wailing the indecipherable words, Cashile cast her herbs onto the frightened animal. Unsheathing the traditional sword reserved for this special task, Cashile got ready, then swung the weapon down.

After the celebrations of the new year, after all of the rites, Cashile descended to the waterhole reserved for her. Cold night water washed off the heavy face paint, all the dried blood from the sacrifice, all of the herbs plastered to her bony hands. Calm and refreshed, the religious rite had set her free. Her dress remained on, as it had ever since she had first grown into it. It was faded and soaked, almost see through. It represented the colours of her tribe, black and yellow.

Always black and yellow.

Louise
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School

Colours hung around his fragile body as if he was a rainbow leaving a banner of joy. He stared at me with a mysterious look. He had lots to say but none was spoken, his body talked instead.

Hunched over, he was an introverted man. A lonely smile managed to hang across his face. He was brave to carry on after the bomb. I'd been told he was a strong soldier. Wiser than the others but was always humble. Back then the war was out of control. Misty sky and a city full of fear. I thought it was bad now but if we kept going without soldiers, we may repeat what happened to Christopher. We needed his help. My sweaty hands clenched. Butterflies circled through my stomach. I stepped forward and knocked the door.

"Who's there?" he grunted.

"Could I please talk to you?" I pleaded.

As the dark wooden door opened, it unlocked a room full of colour and in the corner of my eye was a photograph of two young people outside this house. The male in the photo had full orange hair and a strong arm wrapped across a young lady's body. I took a large step in. His bright blue eyes directed me to a seat. He welcomed me in but I knew I wasn't wanted.

Amanda
Year 8
Raroa Normal Intermediate School