

Grade 6-8  
Short Story  
1<sup>st</sup> Place

Kyranni A.

# A sad truth

## Chapter 1: introduction

There are many things people call miracles but the one true miracle is life. Now why am I telling you this? My story depicts some of my life and some of what happens never happened to me at all. There is grief and triumph in this story. Some people may have gone through some of the events in the story. I just want to say you're never alone in your darkest moments.

## Chapter 2: january 9 monday

The normal cool air of the neighborhood wasn't the same today. It's cold out so instead of walking like I usually do I run to my house. It has never felt so different in this house. I see the tears in my father and sister's eyes and am worried not knowing what happened. Words pierce my ears and the ground feels like it's shaking. I feel as if I'm lost not knowing if I should cry or scream or do anything. I'm just there. All I can hear echoing through my head is

"She's gone"

The only thing we know about life is there is always an end to your time on earth. That end we call death. Something we can't stop and yet is as beautiful as life. Just like day cannot be without night. Life cannot be without death.

## Chapter3: if only

One thing that pops up in people's minds is that if only I could have been there. **If only**. Two words that hurt. It's ok to hurt in moments of sadness but if only isn't something you should think about. When I ran home that day after school I promised never to run home again. One thing I did during my sadness was say if only. If only I hadn't run home if only I had known. Would anything have changed? I believed that one event in your life can cause a chain of events. If anyone feels like they should have been there or they should have just walked home. It's not your fault. If there's one thing I've learned from the healing process is that the words if only make you hurt even more. Hurting ok but if only it isn't.

## Chapter 4: why them?

Why them? Just why? Why does it have to hurt? **WHY?** Me and my sisters asked that exact question. Why them? Why did it have to be her? Truth is I don't know something my mom always told me is that we're all in line and death will be beautiful. Just like life, death can be beautiful too. So why them? I don't know why them but what I do know is that you can't control death. If you could, everyone would decide to live

forever until they wondered what death was. Why them hurts and so does missing someone but it's ok to hurt.

#### Chapter 5: love

There are many things that life has to offer and one of those is love. The one thing that can heal pain is love. Love may never heal the hole in your heart but it helps it. Cause when someone is there for you, you feel more happy. So remember love is always there. When your sad about what happened just remember that person loved you and you loved that person.

#### Chapter 6: pain

Pain is a box. A dark and gloomy box. But if you look close enough you'll see that inside the box there are memories. Memories of happy times that hurt to remember. But even though it hurts you can remember the good things. Like how when they took you to the store that one time or how they taught you so much. So even though pain may look gray and sad on the outside it's beautiful on the inside.

#### Chapter 7: it's ok to hurt

It's ok to hurt is a phrase I've heard and said a lot. To me it means hurting is part of life that means not everything is gonna go your way. People's time on this earth is limited and a lot of people do great things during their time and when they're gone it hurts. But it is ok to hurt but just don't hurt yourself in the process. Just remember that pain is the good memories that hurt to remember. It's ok to hurt.

For grandma

Grade 6-8  
Short Story  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place

Shrigauri H.

## Aftermath

It started as a fairly normal day when I found the stream.

I had just strapped on my gas mask—most pollutants had filtered out of the air by now, but you can never really be too safe—and stepped out of my home to go for a walk. I lived alone on the outskirts of the City, where my children and grandchildren lived.

Avoiding the great silver skyscrapers, I ventured further into the barren wasteland of dust and the occasional insect. The City had synthetic trees and grass and genetically modified crops, but outside of the borders, there were rarely any plants to come across and even then they were all dry bushes and shrubbery, accustomed to their desert-like home. Fresh water was still rationed, so many years after the Silent War and the sixth mass extinction our dear planet earth has seen.

So of course when I heard a sound I hadn't heard in years I wondered if I had imagined it. I hurried toward the sound of trickling water, the sound of life. There—a small, small stream over a bed of mud. I carefully kneeled and touched the water. Bringing my finger to my face, I lifted my mask and touched a drop of it to my tongue—yes—it was water.

I had just stood up with my incredible discovery when I noticed something even more wonderful: saplings. *Real* saplings. A small patch of tiny green leaves tentatively poking up from the soil next to the stream. I had no idea what kind of plant they were.

I hurried home immediately and searched for the old plant encyclopedia I had owned since I was a child, before the nuclear war truly broke out, a memory of a better time. I nearly cried with joy when I found a packet of plant fertilizer tucked into the cover.

The next day, I picked up two cups from my kitchen--the best I could do for a pot and watering can--I hobbled back to the stream with my supplies.

I filled one cup with dirt, uprooted two of the saplings, and buried the roots into my cup. I hadn't done this in ages, but the movements of the habit had never left me. I sprinkled a little bit of the fertilizer into the cup. Scooping up water from the stream with the other cup, I poured it gently over the plants in the cup and carried them back home, leaving the rest of the plants in the soil.

I tended to the plants over the next few months. Once they grew too big, I separated them and moved them into larger cups. After two months of occasionally pulling them up to see the progress, I saw that both plants had sprouted two tiny tubers in the dirt. I was overjoyed.

A few weeks later, one of my children left their young son, Liam, with me for a few hours while they went out to run an errand. Liam was dropped off at my door, all sunshine and smiles that I hadn't seen in months. After a lovely lunch together, Liam noticed the plants.

"Grandpa!" he cried, running up to them. "You have *plants!*"

"Yes!" I said, picking up one of the cups to show him. "I think they're potatoes. Do you know what those are?"

"Uh-huh. They're the root plants. Mommy told me. Where did you get them? Did you make them? Mommy said you liked to grow plants!" Liam said.

I laughed, something I had sorely needed. "You're right, they are roots. Do you want to see where I found them?"

Of course, he wanted to. I took him to the tiny stream, where the little saplings had grown into tubers of their own. He was in awe. He would not stop talking about them, even after we returned home and as he was leaving with his parents.

Liam visited many times over the next year or so. I bought seeds for different plants from the City (which were meant to grow in the City greenhouses, but they let me take some) and taught Liam how to identify and care for different plants.

One time when I was watching him plant a geranium I felt a sharp ache in my lungs. I couldn't breathe. The last thing I saw before blacking out was Liam frantically dialing his parents' numbers on his phone.

When I woke up in the City hospital, I knew I wouldn't last much longer even before the doctor gave me the diagnosis. I was told that I was infected with some disease from dust and gases in the air. I wasn't even listening to the name--all I was thinking about was Liam and our little garden.

I had at most a few months left.

When I was discharged from the hospital, Liam and his parents came to stay with me for my last few months. I told Liam everything I could remember about gardening and caring for plants. I showed him my treasured plant encyclopedia, told him how to find different plants in there. I taught him everything I knew.

I can only hope that I'll leave this world better than I found it. That Liam will make this world better than it was.



**Grade 6-8  
Short Story  
3rd Place**

**Hannah W.**



Lilian Walters wished she had never existed. She wished a lot of things, to the dismay of her former instructors and teachers. She was a girl with her head in the clouds, or rather, the plants. No one understood why a girl with amazing marks, a brilliant mind, and all the prospects in the world was interested in *plants* of all things. The world called Anezekia was in the era of space travel and she was studying plants. She was interested in chemistry, rather than physics. She would rather program DNA than do calculus. In other worlds, this would have been accepted and welcomed. But not Anezekia. They believed firmly in math, logic, and above all, PROGRESS. She tried to explain to them that plants meant progress, too. But they would have none of it. To them, she was just another dreamer, and she was sick of it.

Lilian woke up every morning to the chiming of the Alderclock, the world timekeeper. It sent small signals to every alarm clock to tell them what time it was. The Alderclock was yet another example of the Ways Ensuring Peace. 571 years ago there was a horrific war, one that nearly wiped out all life. They barely managed to save it, but the plant life had been wiped out to but a few small spots. To Lilian it was tragic. To the rest of the world it was necessary. Just like the Trash Pit. The Trash Pit was where they had dumped all of their weapons, nuclear and otherwise. Lilian knew that that wasn't a good idea, they really had no idea what that could do to, well, *anything*.

After waking up, she looked at the date. *Great, don't have anything to do today.* She thought, getting excited. That meant that she could visit her laboratory in the 35 WildPlace. The Great Council had finally thought to give her science a try to get more food sources, and they supplied her with a small laboratory, but that was it. It was more than enough, though. She was SO CLOSE to making a breakthrough about the rare dande-lion. She quickly got dressed in tan pants, a t-shirt and coat. She hopped on her bike, not wanting to waste precious fuel on using her

leviator. As she went she could feel the glares drilling into her back. They thought she was another radical who wanted to destroy their peace. Lilian Walters may have been a lot of things but she did not believe in fighting. What she did believe, however, was that plants could pave the way to the future. Their food stores were growing low, and medicine was now a rare commodity. With the right tools, she could save the Anezkians.

Her long green hair, tied into a ponytail flew behind her as she biked. Her unnerving purple eyes scanned the path in front of her for any pedestrians. She lived only a short way away, and it wasn't long until she arrived at what she perceived as her real home. As she stepped inside of her personalized lab, she exhaled a breath she hadn't realized she'd been holding. Taking off her jacket, she replaced it with a dirt stained lab coat and got to work.

It was a densely packed forest ecosystem, and she had taken care to supply it with as close its native inhabitants as she could find. Leaves brushed against her as she stepped inside the protective bubble over the forest. She always loved coming in here. It seemed to welcome her in, drawing her closer. She trailed her fingers along a common fog bulb. It let out its sweet smell, its blue-tinted fog twisting along the vines and trees. She walked slowly to an area she hadn't searched as much, and promptly tripped on a twisting lily. She fell hard, banging her head on the root of a nearby tree. She was about to get up when a bright splash of color caught her eye.

She crawled forward warily, watching the colorful thing cautiously. Upon closer inspection she realized it was a plant. It was small, still just a bulb, but she didn't recognize its plant type. She pulled a small shovel and a trowel from her bag, and carefully uprooted the bulb. She ran back to her lab, still careful, but rushed. She burst out of the protective bubble, sealing it shut behind her. She grabbed the nearest pot, a small blue one, and hurriedly transplanted the bulb. Out of breath she stared at her newest advancement in botany.

The next morning she woke up early and canceled the few appointments she had. This new plant would require all of her concentration. Rushing into the space where she had left it, she was shocked to see it had burst out of its small bulb and was now growing centimeters at a time, right before her eyes. She pulled out a notepad and jotted down; *extremely fast growing and adaptive, mutated?*

She leaned over the plant with a magnifying screen to see it more clearly. It was emitting a soft yellow glow. The day led to even more advancements in her study of plants; they could emit light, and grow at an extremely fast pace. Or was it just this plant? If that was the case, why only this one? Was it mutated? Her head spun with questions and theories, and she longed to stay her with her little miracle, but people would be suspicious. In some ways she didn't think she was worthy of this opportunity. Why should she, an unfocused dreamer, be allowed to handle such a specimen? But this could finally be the way to prove that plants could save Anezekia.

Over the next few weeks she spent all of her time in the lab with her miracle. However, she always made sure she wasn't followed. The Council was still and might always be wary of plant life. She knew that people were following her where she went, so she was forced to take longer and more complicated routes to throw them off her trail. The plant, however, was thriving. It had bloomed into a glowing flower. It had a long and graceful stem, with supple and thick leaves at its base. The flower was gorgeous, it glowed a lime yellow color, and a smaller flower sprouted out of the bigger base flower. Long tendrils also branched from the center, and moved of their own accord. She had discovered that the plant had a strange liking for meat. She discovered that by feeding it small pieces of her lunch.

One day she wasn't as careful. She had grown used to her routine, and she had woken up a little later than usual, and needed to hurry. She made the fatal mistake of taking a direct path

right to her lab. Her neighbor, or who she thought was her neighbor, followed her and spied through the large windows. He looked through and saw her little miracle perking up to meet her, and saw her feed it raw meat. Saw it as it relished it and consumed it quickly. Watched her smile and stroke one of its leaves. He was horrified. This could destroy a human easily, he realized as he watched it grow a little bit more. It was already at least two feet tall now. He had no choice. He had to report this.

The plant was thrilled at its new living conditions. It had been a small bulb, unsure if it should put down its roots. Then its caretaker had arrived, or rather crashed. It was scary at first, but it quickly became clear that she didn't mean to hurt it. It began growing, and she nourished and fed it. It would not hesitate to kill for her, and it had a strange premonition that it might have to soon.

Lilian felt like her world couldn't be more perfect. She finally had a purpose and a reason to continue her research besides saving a race that had never understood her. That all was destroyed when they burst into her lab. Glass shattered everywhere and plants were knocked out of their pots. They seized her beautiful little miracle. She screamed and they seized her too. They brought them to the Trash Pit, where they dangled her and her little miracle over the edge. And then they dropped her one purpose, her one love, into the glowing depths of the Pit.

The strange people had dropped it. It should be dying, shriveling up, that it knew, but it wasn't. It was growing, faster than ever, reaching up towards the sunlight and revenge. All else cleared from its mind but the need to GROW. It raced up along the dirt walls of the pit, using the energy to propel it upwards. They would all pay for its fallen siblings. In blood.

Lilian fell to her knees, happy tears streaming from her odd, purple eyes. *It's beautiful;* was what she whispered when the plants consumed her and everything else.

**Grade 6-8  
Short Story  
Honorable  
Mention**

**Maya M.**

14-year-old Fabelia "Fable" Murale may have agreed that this was a very impractical way to do things, but she was so desperate to go back there. Her thirst for knowledge and love for books relieved the pain, discomfort, and any hesitation she had of going out. The sun was barely up yet and you could only see a little bit of the fire colored sky, before it blended back up into a milky azul hue, so why was she doing this? It was simply because she *could*. Why wait until the sun was up and everyone was awake when she could do it *now*? Fable had managed to shut the garage door on her way out and balance while holding a thick stack of books which suspensefully towered over her.

Fable had managed to hop the three blocks and reached her destination just in time to see Mr. Linden, put the We are Open, So Get Lost in a New Book sign on the glass door, before dropping all the books, which landed on the dirty, paved sidewalk with a flourish. She quickly glanced around to make sure nobody had seen this strange girl at 5:00 a.m surrounded by eleven books.

The door opened, nearly rattling and breaking her head. Fable looked up to see a white-haired man that had sparkling blue-gray eyes and a goofy smile on his wrinkled face. Fable's heart warmed at the sight of him, and she returned the smile. Ever since her father left her at birth and her mother had gone on a two year business trip, Mr. Linden had been a true companion. With no offspring himself, Fable was like his own and they thoroughly enjoyed each other. He always came by to daze the young girl with his homemade goods and was willing to have heated discussions about their favorite books.

"Fable? What are you doing here this early?" Mr. Linden asked, while bending down to pick up the fallen books. "Have you finished *all* those?"

She nodded and grinned.



"You are such a book addict," he joked and opened the door for her. "You can never stop."

Fable entered the small, cozy library and inhaled the scent of old books and dusty articles that were itching on the shelves, waiting to be read.

"So..." Fable asked. "Any new books?"

"Well, not much." Mr. Linden said, looking thoughtful. "Well, there is something... no, never mind."

"What?" Fable questioned, getting excited.

"Well," The librarian hesitated before going on. "Remember when I went on that vacation to Hawaii? While scuba diving, I saw a *book*. When I got it out of the water and went to investigate, I found out that it was completely dry. I would never have given up a chance to go on another fictional adventure, so I read it."

"Which would have been the most sensible thing to do." Fable interrupted.

Mr. Linden smiled and continued. "After reading the book for a bit, I started to notice vine-like things coming out of it, getting larger the longer I read. When I closed the book, the vines disappeared. This process repeated every single day until I managed to finish the book without being in contact with the plant."

"That's weird." Fable said. "What, is that book magical or something?"

"It is weird, isn't it?" Mr. Linden asked. "So I'm doing some investigating of my own... but I haven't found anything useful. Anyway!"

Mr. Linden grabbed a thin, teal covered book, named *A Book Nerd's World* that was vineless and surprisingly, in perfect condition.



Before handing it to Fable he said. "I must warn you: this is the most amazing book I have ever read, and therefore is very *addicting*. You love books much more than I do, so I want you to do this: the second you see the vines, close the book. And remember, you can give back the book, if you get scared." He dropped it into her hands, looking very sorry.

"Don't worry, I'll be *fine*." Fable said. But little did she know, her cockiness would stab her in the back like a piercing spear.



After a rushed shower, and lunch, Fable finally curled up on her tiny wooden chair and opened *A Book Nerd's World* and read. Mr. Linden was right. This was an amazing book. The balance between romance, fantasy, and sci-fi was perfect. The characters were intriguing and the plot was *awesome*. But after reading for about an hour Fable noticed something strange: Tiny little bits of coiled, jade green seaweed-looking things peeked out from the top of the spine, like a baby chick hatching from their egg.

Despite Mr. Linden's warning, Fable paid no attention to it for she knew that it was still a while before the vines started becoming more ferocious, besides the book was still completely readable. Fable read on, trying to not look or think about the seaweed. By the time she had reached the climax of the book, when the heroine Lia found out that her father, well - no spoilers, she gasped.

The clusters of seaweed started growing at a much faster pace, uncoiling and opening up as though judging Fable's cramped, tiny, book-filled bedroom. She squealed as she closed the novel and threw it on the floor, but it opened up and revealed the seaweed to be bigger than ever. The deadly plant now had dangerous thorns crawling up it and now was a sickening inky dark black.

The vines crept along her windows, ripping off her light blue curtains and shattering her window. It pointed its thorns threateningly at her and Fable backed up as far as she could to her back wall.

"Pl-please don't hurt me." Fable stammered. The bunch of seaweeds shook in response, as though laughing at her stupidity. One of the vines lunged at her and she narrowly avoided it, skidding over her bed and landing on the floor in a heroic position. The young girl smiled, hoping she would get this pose on a statue once she killed this beast and became a hero. Being lost in her fantastical daydreams gave this maniacal plant an advantage. It swiftly moved across the floor and wrapped itself around Fable and right in the nick of time. Fable trashed and cried, tried anything.

But it was too late.

She was pinned to the floor and a flood of emotions went through her. First Fable felt hopeless. There was absolutely nothing she could do. She was almost completely immersed in the seaweed and there was no miracle that would happen, nobody coming to save her. This was not like the books. Then she felt angry. This was all Mr. Linden's fault. Why didn't he warn her? Then the girl felt guilt coursing through her. He *had* warned her about the book. Numerous times. Mr. Linden being a kind man would live his life in regret if she died. But now it was too late.

As the vines enclosed her completely, her breathing and pulse stopped, her last thoughts being, *I'm so sorry Mr. Linden.*

Grade 6-8  
Short Story  
Honorable  
Mention

Tommy F.M.

## A Tale of Two Brothers

\*Cough, cough.\*

"Are you okay, Jimmy?"

"Just a cough. And a headache. And I'm tired. And a stomachache. And-"

"Okay, that's enough! And guess what? I'm going to put on a puppet show for you!"

Francis put a tray with chicken and wild rice soup and a banana next to his morose brother on the couch; Jimmy glanced at it and then ignored it. Francis started over to the couch with a couple of chairs. Jimmy watched, interested.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Just watch," responded Francis. He spread a blanket over the chairs so that his brother couldn't see what was going on on the other side. Suddenly, he heard his little brother cough loudly. He looked up hurriedly.

"Are you all right? Do you want some tea?" he queried.

"Yes and yes, please," his brother answered. Francis disappeared into a doorway and returned a minute later with chamomile tea, steaming and with a little honey mixed in. *Just enough*, he thought, *that Mom won't mind.*

"That better?"

"Yes, thanks," Jimmy responded. *He still looks sad*, his brother thought. *Being sick can do that.* He ran off again and reappeared with a pair of objects stuffed up his shirt. He looked at them when he was behind the makeshift stage. There was a green sock puppet that was supposed to look like a snake with red pompom eyes, and there was also one which looked like a fuzzy

brown bear. He gathered his thoughts for a second and then stuck the bear puppet up above the edge of the chairs.

“Hello, boys and- oh, I guess just, ‘Boy.’ I’m Nerdo! I like doing things like camping out to get movie tickets eleven months early, playing video games for nine hours straight, and wearing the goofiest looking lenses possible. I’m also a fan of going computer shopping every two days! I-”

Without warning, Jimmy burst into a loud, violent coughing fit, bent double. Francis dropped the puppet and ran over.

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. Can you keep doing the puppet show?”

“You like it?”

“Yeah, it’s awesome! Keep going!” Despite his exuberant response, Jimmy still looked fairly sad. *Well, I can fix that*, thought Francis. He ran over and picked Nerdo back up. After a moment of contemplation, he decided what to do with the snake. He heard Jimmy pick up the soup bowl.

“Hiya, Nerdo, what’s up?”

“Annoyance the Snake? What are-”

“Got any grub?”

“You never change, do-”

“I said, *got any grub?*”

“I take it back. You got more annoying!”

A strange sound came from the couch. Francis looked up.

“What happened?”

"I laughed. Keep going!" Jimmy grabbed the banana, soup bowl empty.

*Only a tinge of sadness left!* thought Francis. He had an idea for how to wipe the sadness off his brother's face completely. He got ready with the bear.

"You know, I think I do have some grub!"

"Really? Where?"

"One sec." Nerdo grabbed the snake's tiny tail and managed to pull it over to the snake's mouth.

"This ain't very good; no, it's terrible!"

"Makes sense; after all, it's your tail!"

"Pteahw! You mangy \$%LG&\*&VD\$#@V":JG%\$H'M! I'll fix you!" The two animals battled until, finally, they both fell off the stage, out of sight behind the blanket. Jimmy snickered with delight. He looked much happier than the dreary little personality who had been sitting on the couch when Francis came in. He put down the banana peel on the tray. Then, he yawned.

"You should sleep; Mom says so," Francis reminded him.

"Doctor's orders," Jimmy said, and they both laughed. Their mom was a doctor. Francis picked up the puppets, the tray, and turned out the lights. As he was leaving, he turned and said:

"Get well soon, little brother."

"I will," Jimmy responded drowsily. As the door closed and he lay thinking about how good his brother had been to him, Jimmy slipped into a peaceful sleep.

Grade 6-8  
Short Story  
Honorable  
Mention

Elsa H.



## Reflection

"Let me tell you a story, Rolan."

I didn't want to listen. My brother and I were very different. His idea of a story was my idea of an academic essay. And that is what I told him, the last time we saw each other. He had to realize at some point that just because we looked identical, it didn't mean we were the same person. So this is a record of my travels, written for whomever happens to stumble upon it in the future. Signed, Rolan Sagenhaft, Rikedom City, Sagolikt, Year 817.

I remembered the moment when I put the pen down and walked out. I had left Rikedom that day, and the next, I had left Sagolikt altogether. My home city, and my home Nation were gone in an instant, replaced by a desire that had fueled my search across the world.

That was two years ago, and my journey still beckoned. I had to find out what really happened that day, the day when my brother disappeared.

*Rolan treats me like I know nothing at all, just because I value etiquette above rambunctiousness, unlike him. It seems that we have no hope of getting along, yet I know that we will stand by each other through anything.*

*I should finish my records for today. I still have no idea what compels me to write them out. What use will I ever have for a private collection of all my experiences? Yet I continue adding to it...*

I remember being confused as to why Odell would spend hours writing about how his day was. He actually believed that I didn't know he was keeping records of everything he saw. Somehow he valued keeping the past, while I valued looking to the present. I wish I could've known what he had been thinking that day, then maybe I could find him. But the world is enormous, and where have I gotten after two years of searching? Nowhere.

Odell's favorite place to travel was always Isbreen, that's why I'm here. I remember he would always look down off the pier and tell me that the water looked like glass. And we'd go to a teahouse, even though neither of us liked tea very much. We just wanted to seem sophisticated, and somehow I always ended up making a fool out of myself.

*I could hardly keep from laughing out loud as Rolan tried and failed to become a human dictionary. Somehow, he's associated the word 'laudable' with fruit pies! We'd better leave, before Rolan ends up spilling tea all over the floor. Again.*

I had learned later that 'laudable' actually meant "deserving praise". That word couldn't be in greater contrast to my life. I never took anything seriously until my search began. Odell and I had good times, but I guess we never really appreciated each other very much, and we fought more than we got along. Now, I just want to stop and remember the good times, and I wish there were more of them.

It was a long walk to the pier, because along the way I saw a stray cat, pale gray with green eyes, and I just *had* to feed it. It's what Odell would've done

I remembered something, as I was looking down into the glistening water. Odell had once told me how he had once found a cat, pale gray with green eyes.

*I had once found a cat, sitting all alone on a street corner. I pitied it, so I found a local restaurant serving fish, and bought the cat a meal. It must have appreciated this, because it followed me home. Unfortunately, the cat didn't get along with the dogs who lived in the outer courtyard. To solve this, I let the cat stay in my study, but it seemed to resent the fact that there were dogs nearby, and one day, it just vanished. No open windows or doors, and no signs of it having been eaten by the dogs, so where did it go?*

Maybe this was a sign. I needed to appreciate life from Odell's point of view. I sat on the edge of the pier, trying to think of what Odell would've seen in that rippling water. A mirror, perhaps? When I thought of it this way, I paid more attention to the image below me, rippling with the water. I didn't see a reflection, just an image of Odell. But, I guess that's the same as a reflection, isn't it?

I felt a presence behind me, and looked up, to the far side of the pier, where I was sure someone was sitting, looking into the water, just like me. But there was nobody there.

*The pier felt empty when I realized that nobody was sitting there. I was all alone. Two years since Rolan disappeared, two years of searching. Maybe I should just accept that he's gone, just like that cat. It seems that, just like that cat, resentment pulled Rolan away. Of course It's my fault, too. We never appreciated each other, or even tried to*

*understand each other. If only I could have realized this sooner, then maybe we could've gotten along.*

...could've gotten along. I almost said the words aloud, hoping they would come true. I'm sure if Odell were in my position, he would be thinking the same thing.

I heard a noise, and looked behind me, only to see another reflection. To my surprise, it spoke.

"Rolan?"

I stood up immediately. I wasn't going to question what was going on, or why Odell was standing in front of me.

I knew that from that day forward, we must always try to understand each other, and always respect each other's differences.

As it turns out, we had been so resentful towards each other that we disappeared from each other's lives. It was incredibly strange, and it had made us realize that even though we may be different, we should always respect each other's differences, and be open to new ideas.

That is why this entry will be the first in my record collection, which I only started because Odell inspired me to.

Signed, Rolan Sagenhaft