Grade 6-8

Short Story

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Масу V.

Name Rebels

Tears slid down the woman's face. Her eyes were crinkled in emotion. She wasn't  
necessarily worried or mad or sad. The emotions she was feeling weren't really like that. It was  
more of her realizing the events that would soon take place. The line was getting shorter. Her  
heartbeat quickened. The lady in front of her silently crossed a name off of a piece of paper. She  
hung her head and let the guards take her down the hallway to who knows where. Suddenly, the  
woman was given a ballpoint pen. The woman looked at the table before her and breathed in and  
out. Her eyes skimmed the names on the sheet of paper and somehow, the woman knew what  
name to cross off. She prayed a quick prayer, crossed the name off and felt a pair of firm arms  
grab her wrists. She was handcuffed and led down the dark hallway, to who knows where. She  
was taken past a room labeled "nursery". Inside were rows of bassinets that were holding  
newborn children including her own. The woman only had one hope left. That her daughter  
would grow up and fight this. That her dear Alessandra would grow up and be the defender of  
mankind that she was meant to be.

12 years later

"Come on Calista! We are going to be late!" Alessandra yelled from across the  
school's courtyard.

"I'm coming! Hold on!" Calista responded. Calista was the prettiest 12 year old in all the city.  
She was dark skinned with curly brown hair that framed her face perfectly. Her eyes were as pale  
as the morning sky and she had a cute button nose. Her smile could light up a room. She had  
freckles on her nose. Her height wasn't too tall, or too short. Calista means "most beautiful" and  
everyone could classify her as that.

"Calista you know that if we get another tardy Ms. Sorén will give us a week of detention!"  
Alessandra was already halfway through the door that would lead them back to the school  
building.

"I told you Alessandra, I'm coming!" Calista walked through the door and was blasted with  
fresh air conditioning. It was almost summer, and the weather was scorching hot. Alessandra was  
sweating, but she had more important things to think about. There had been a lot of things in the  
news about the "name rebels". The Children Guardians hadn't explained a lot to her, but from  
what she has heard, they sounded like a group of people who protest. Alessandra was a curious  
person, and how could you blame her? The whole community didn't know who their parents  
were and there were some sketchy things happening in the news. Alessandra heard Ms. Sorén  
yelling through the hallways warning the children who weren't in class yet. Alessandra strided  
into Ms. Soren's room just as the bell rang. Calista was already in her seat next to their friend  
Ziki.

"Hey Alessandra!" Ziki greeted Alessandra with a smile. She sat down in the middle of them  
and looked at the piece of paper already laid on her desk. Unlike the worksheets she had received  
before, this one was blank. The other children in her class were looking at Ms. Sorén in  
confusion, wondering what they had to do.

"Good afternoon class, I know that you are all anxious to leave because it is your last class of  
the day, but today we have a very important lesson." Ms. Soren's eagle eyes stared holes into  
each of the child's foreheads. Her eyes were gray and cold. Just looking at them made Alessandra  
shudder.

"Today we are going to be talking about the "name rebels". I'm sure that many of you have  
questions about his whole rebellion, and it is my job to answer those questions. Please take out a  
writing utensil and take notes while you watch the video." Ms. Soren walked over to her  
computer and pressed a button. The smartboard lit up and a woman's voice played through the  
speakers.

"A male named Asani is leading this rebellion. He has organized marches and protests that  
occur about once a week. Please stay aware. They are very dangerous and could cause a lot of  
harm." Alessandra zoned out for a couple of minutes. She had been thinking a lot lately about  
one very important question. In her community, when you were named something that is what  
your destiny would be. There was no discussion or exceptions. The meaning of your name is  
who you are, and that's that. It made sense, Calista means "most beautiful" and look at her! Ziki  
means "clever" and he was probably the most clever kid in the school. The thing that Alessandra  
was thinking about however was her name. Alessandra means "defender of mankind". How was  
Alessandra a defender of mankind? She wasn't exactly shy or weak. She was actually quite  
athletic and strong, but that didn't mean she was a defender of mankind. Alessandra was worried.  
*Maybe I'm messed up. Maybe I did something wrong.* She thought. Alessandra realized that the  
video was over and she hadn't written anything!

"Ziki!" she whispered "Help! I didn't write anything!" Ziki rolled his eyes and turned his paper  
so Alessandra could see. She scribbled in notes while Ms. Soren was talking.

"Alessandra! Pencils down! Detention for a week!" Alessandra looked up and made eye  
contact with Ms. Soren. She dropped her pencil and glared at the ground. Ms. Soren had to be the  
rudest teacher in the whole school. Soren meant "strict" and "severe".

"Maybe now you will follow the directions." Ms. Soren sneered. Alessandra used all of her  
self control not to yell. The bell rang signifying the school day to be over.

"Turn in your notes on my desk on your way out children! You may head to the courtyard  
before dinner." That was another really weird thing about this community. Nobody had family or  
even knew who they were, so they lived at the school. There were cabins next to the building for  
children to sleep in. Alessandra stood up and followed Calista and Ziki out of the building.

"Secret meeting!" Ziki announced once they got into the courtyard. Alessandra and Calista  
looked at each other weirdly and headed over to the old oak tree. The friends rarely had secret  
meetings, only on very special occasions. This must be important. Once they were in the shade  
that the tree provided, The sat down.

Does anyone else think something wasn't right in class?" Zion spoke.

"Yes! Ms. Sorén started scolding Alessandra when I was doing the same thing as Alessandra!"  
Calista responded.

"No! Well, yes, but no! It was something bigger than that!" Zion was standing now.

"Did it have to do with that video?" Alessandra looked at Ziki.

"Exactly! There was something off about all those news reporters. I think there is something  
serious going on about the "name rebels". Remember how the ringleader was named Asani? I  
looked up his name, and it means "rebellious". I don't think this is just some group of people  
protesting. This is supposed to happen. This is destined." Ziki looked serious.

"Do you mean... that you think that these "name rebels" are good?" Calista's face was twisted  
in confusion. Alessandra nodded.

"I think you are right, Ziki. I think that these reporters are hiding something big!" Alessandra  
looked off into the distance. The sun was starting to set, it was about time for dinner.

"I know that it is time for dinner guys, but I have something I need to tell you," Zion looked  
guilty. "I know where to find these "name rebels". Alessandra and Calista stared at Zion.

"Why would we want to know where they are?" Alessandra asked Zion as she started to stand  
up. Calista agreed with Alessandra.

"Two reasons actually," Zion was more serious than he had ever been. "One: Alessandra is  
meant to be a part of the "name rebels" This is her chance to be a "defender of mankind". Two:  
This is the first step we need to take to find our parents!" Then the bell rang signifying  
dinnertime. The trio silently walked into the cafeteria, prepared for their destiny.

Grade 6-8

Short Story

2^ Place

Shriaauri H.

12/25/2023

Merry Christmas! This year, for Christmas, I’m treating myself to this journal-/  
*swear HI actually fill it out this* i/zne/-aaaaand a five-day solo hike in Voyageur’s  
National Park. Nothing but snow, trees, and sky. I’ll keep an account of the whole thing  
via photos and diary entries, so I can remember it forever. I cannot wait.

12/26/2023 - Day one (!!!)

I’ve set up a sort of camp in the clearing and I’m writing this at night by flashlight  
in my tent. Overall a pretty good start to the trip. Haven’t seen many animals, but I saw  
some odd-looking tracks a little ways off the trail. I went to check them out because they  
didn’t seem like anything I’d seen before. They were massive, like three feet long.  
Maybe a person on skis or dragging their feet while they walked? I don’t know, I haven’t  
seen any other signs of people so far, but I think there’s some kind of a rest stop  
somewhere near here so maybe that’s it.

Anyway, the sky is gorgeous—I don’t think I’ve seen this many stars in my life.  
And it’s *freezing,* but hey—all part of the fun, right? I’ll update more tomorrow, I think my  
fingers are going numb.

12/27/2023 - Day two

Today was kind of weird. I could have sworn I heard a person calling for help a  
few hours ago. I tried to listen for it again to see where it was coming from, but it only  
happened the one time. I called out a little bit, to see if anyone would respond, but I  
heard nothing else. Maybe I should have called 911 or something. Although I don’t think

I have any signal. Maybe HI just report it when I get to the visitors center at the end of  
my hike.

12/28/2023 - Day three

I woke up this morning and there was just this *horrible* stench, like something  
rotting. Maybe I set up camp near an animal carcass and didn’t notice it, but the smell  
sort of *lingered* in the worst way. It faded away around noon I think, but I still have no  
idea what it was. I saw marks on trees, like slashes carved into the bark. I thought  
maybe they were just some kind of trail markers, but there are official national park trail  
markers, too, so I don’t know why someone would carve into trees for no reason. I might  
have heard someone calling out for help again, but I think I just imagined it this time.

12/28/2023 - Day three (middle of the night)

I tried to sleep but I got woken up about an hour or so ago by a loud screeching  
noise. It was probably some kind of hurt animal, but I just feel really uneasy about it. I  
keep getting sudden chills, even though I’m in my tent with a heated blanket. I don’t  
know, but I’m about ready for this hike to be over. It’s not as fun as I thought it would be.  
Just one more night, thankfully.

12/29/2023 - Day four

I swear something has been watching me. All day I keep feeling like there are  
eyes on me. I don’t *think* there are any large predators in this area, but I keep seeing  
something out of the corner of my eye. Like a really tall figure with claws. Seriously

freaking me out. Plus the rotting smell is back. This will probably be the last solo hike I  
take, at least for a while. !,II probably reach the end of the trail by tomorrow afternoon, if  
I move fast. At least it’ll be over soon.

**MISSING PERSONS REPORT (CASE UPDATE)**

Case filed: January *2,* 2024

Description of missing person: Caucasian male, brown eyes, brown hair

Height: 5’1T’

Weight: approx. 179 lbs.

Last seen: December 26, 2023

Last known location: Voyageur’s National Park Visitor Center

Last seen wearing: red puffer jacket, black pants, green hiking backpack

Case updated: January 4, 2024

Body matching case description found at [location confidential].

Description: Person appears to have passed away 34־ days ago. Body was found with  
claw-like tears in skin and clothing. Three-foot-long footprints found in snow near body.  
Trees in surrounding area marked with slash-like gouges. Smaller trees and bushes  
trampled by large animal. Notebook found with account of December 25th through  
December 29th, 2023. Notebook filed as evidence.

Grade 6-8

Short Story

3׳d Place

Emilia M.

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rhc À Mission

Anna slipped in the front door of her apartment and grabbed her computer. After she signed  
in, she frantically scanned her inbox searching for a certain email. She finally located it at the very  
bottom of her inbox. She clicked on the link and used it to hack into a special file. She slid a key card  
into the computer and once it was loaded she dashed up to her bedroom and opened her closet door,  
smoothing her chestnut hair. She stepped into her closet, which turned out to be an elevator, and began  
shooting downwards.

She landed and arrived in a meeting hall with a large table in the center suiTounded by many  
elegant looking people.

“Mr. Spencer, I have excellent news,” Anna said to a tall thin man with a long nose and a  
dignified expression. “Princess Julia will be making a visit to Newbridge Castle for the new year.”

“That is all well and good, but I don’t see what's so important about it,” piped up an elegant lady  
with thick gold hair and starry blue eyes.

“That's not all, Miss Ashton,” Anna replied, looking slightly harassed. “She will be taking  
Richard Dredmor as her personal assistant!”

Dredmor, that scoundrel!” intemipted a short, bald man with an immense red mustache at the  
very bottom of the table.

]hacked into Dredmor’s files and discovered a confidential document of Dredmor’s plans.”  
Anna continued, undisturbed by his ridiculous facial hair. “Princess Julia’s chief advisor, Rogerick von  
Hisimo III, has gone over to Dredmor?s side and they are planning to kidnap Princess Julia!” At once the  
hall erupted with murmuring and everyone was talking at once.

،،i have an idea!” exclaimed a elderly woman who had just arrived in the hall.

"What is your idea, Mrs. Rachel?” inquired Mr. Spencer, leaning forward in his chair with  
interest.

■

“I propose that we send Agent Anna since she has proven to be a resourceful young lady and is  
an excellent spy. We shall install her as a maid in the service of Princess Julia.” She said tliis all in one  
breath and by the time she finished she was gasping. All of the people in the hall had a thoughtful look  
on their faces, and Mr. Spencer said, ،،Go on, Mrs. Rachel.”

“Well,” she responded, “Miss Anna will lure Dredmor out onto the moor and then we can send  
out police to intercept him!”

“Brilliant!” exclaimed Mr. Delaware, who was the roly-poly president of Spies International and  
had a thick Scottish accent and a giant fedora. “We lure him into our trap, and then boom, we’ve got  
him!”

،،!’]] leave right away,” said Anna, confidently, jumping up and grabbing her notebook.

“Our hopes go witli you, Miss Anna,” said Mr. Spencer, banging his fist on the table. “Good  
luck.”

“Thank you, sir,” she responded, and then she dashed out of the room and into the elevator.  
While the elevator shot upward she began planning for the mission ahead. When she reached the top she  
noticed that her computer was making a high pitched beeping noise, the exact noise it made when she  
received a message. She immediately sat down at her desk and punched in the code to open her email.  
Then she saw it- there right in front of her was an email from Mrs. Rachel stating every last detail of her  
mission. She greedily clicked on the email and read it.

Agent Anna:

At precisely 9 pm a taxi will arrive to take you to Newbridge Castle. Shortly beforehand, a package  
will arrive containing the uniform of one of the maids in the service of Princess Julia. Your secret identity  
will be that of Miss Luciana Bell. We have informed the true Miss Bell and she is allowing you to assume  
her identity. Once you have arrived you will be assigned to the chambers of Mr. Dredmor. Place the  
enclosed letter on his bedside table. If the letter fails, then here is plan B: On the 31st of December there  
will be a party. Mr. Dredmor will be planning to kidnap her that night. You will inform Mr. Dredmor that a  
man in the gardens would like to speak to him. We will be waiting for him. Good luck.

Mrs. Rachel Conente

Director of information

9 Pm「'Anna exclaimed. She glanced up at the clock on the wall. It read 8:45. That meant that  
the sPgai Package would arrive any minute. She leapt into action and started packing her bags. Five  
mmutes later, she heard the doorbell ring and knew the package had been delivered. She grabbed it off  
her porch and ripped it open. Inside of it was the gray, scratchy uniform of a royal maid. She jumped into  
herunifonn, itching at the texture before leaping down the staii-s. When the taxi pulled up she hopped  
inside, and the driver sped off toward Newbridge Castle. An hour later, the taxi skidded upto the back  
entrance and she slipped through the servant door. Cook, a large woman with an even larger apron and a  
frown, spotted her and, reading Anna’s name tag, said sharply,

“Luciana, hurry up to Mr. Dredmor’s room before he arrives.” She punctuated her sharp words  
with a swing of her mighty steel ladle and Anna dashed up the stairs. She quickly located Mr.Dredmor’s  
room and placed the letter on his desk. When she heard voices in the hall she grabbed a duster and began  
dusting the bedside table.

When he entered, Mr. Dredmor noticed her and said, “You, girl. Out.”

Anna gave a quick curtsy before backing out of the room and running for the servants’ quarters.  
She collapsed onto an empty bed in a bunk room, and in a minute she was fast asleep. The next morning  
she woke at the crack of dawn and sleepily rushed to Mr. Dredmor’s rooms. But once she got to the  
room, she realized that he had already left.

Oh no!” she whispered with a sinking heart. She ripped her radio out of her pocket and ran for  
Princess Julia's rooms. As she ran through the corridors she hit the On button on her radio and yelled,  
“Code red! Repeat- Code Red! Send reinforcements!” She ran past Cook, who was coming  
from the storerooms.

Cook noticed her and shouted in an angry voice, swinging her ladle once again, “Luciana! Get  
back here!”

She lgnored her and continued running toward Princess Julia’s room. When she reached the  
room, she realized that she was too late. The room had been trashed and it looked like there had been a

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clearly written hastily. It said:

5731 Northumberland Rd. hurry

the note. She was transferred to Mrs. Rachel who ״, Anna's heart leaped as she phonedimmediately asked, “Do you have coordinates?”

“Yes!” Anna answered “5731 Northumberland Road.”

Perfect,” she answered. “Get there right away.” Then she hung up.

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International pulled up, guns loaded.

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”!shouted, Come out witli your hands up

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555, „ ״ ־،.„\*,، ، ,، № g g g

her out of the house.

nved while Anna responded,־“ Then they helped the pnncess mto a that had a

"You're welcome, Your Highness.”

Once the Princess left,Anna hopped into a taxi to her house. As soon as she got home, she took a  
,nice long nap to recover from her mission

Grade 68־

Short Story

Honorable

Mention

Hannah W.

The dark and rusting gates of Windlethrop Manor loomed before the crew of the  
hit paranormal show, Getting With the Ghosties. The somewhat laughable name of the  
show reflected the tone of it, as viewers mostly tuned in not for solid paranormal  
evidence, but for the witty commentary provided by one of the “investigators”, Will  
Turner. Will smirked at the iron gates barring the way to an antiquated mansion.

Turning towards the camera operated by permanently amused camerawoman  
and sound person, Liliana Green, he offered his feedback on the current subject of the  
show’s critique, “Haunted Mansion got QUITE the downgrade, now didn’t it?”

Liliana smiled behind the camera and switched the focus to Will’s somewhat  
distressed-looking costar, April Johnson. April twisted her fingers together, ever the  
image of the terrified believer next to the courageous and skeptical Will. April didn’t  
address the comment, instead opting to open the gates while giving the viewers the  
needed background on the dilapidated house.

“Windlethrop Manor is arguably one of the most haunted spots in the world,  
remarkably from only one apparition. Multiple investigators, much like ourselves, have  
entered this mansion and come out traumatized, or not at all. Now, at first I was hesitant  
to sign the waiver for the house with one of the highest death tolls from the paranormal,  
but hey, whatever the producer wants, the producer gets, right?” The bitterness was  
unmistakable in April’s tone and Liliana frowned, frustrated at having to edit something  
out so early. April made no attempt to follow up on the comment, and wandered beyond  
the gates towards the house.

Uliana glared at April’s blue-highlighted and swinging ponytail as she switched

the focus to Will, who too was heading towards the mansion. Liliana turned off the

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camera and hurried after them, panting slightly and cursing her lack of stamina. As the  
sole director of sound and camera she really should've acted on that gym membership  
she made months ago as part of yet another new year resolution. And yet it was now in  
the scorching middle of the summer and she wasn’t any more fit than she was five  
months ago. What a waste of money.

April twisted her fingers as she paused before the threshold of the manor. She  
really shouldn’t have come back here. Not after last time. But she really wasn’t in a  
position to refuse right now, and their producer (who she was fairly sure was the devil)  
made sure to let her know that. She still couldn’t believe that she’d been so *stupid.* Like,  
it should’ve been obvious that it was a scam. From the shady nature of the caller, to the  
peculiar instructions, warning signs were all around her. But she had never really been  
the smartest in her class. So now all her life savings were in the hands of some  
scammer and her future was in the hands of her producer. She shook her head to clear  
out the thoughts and instead focused on the episode. Same drill as usual. She looks for  
ghosts, none appear, Will laughs at her, the audience laughs at her, heck, even the  
producers laugh at her. Everybody laughs and the episode is a hit. Her memories claw  
at her mind, fighting for attention, and she shook her head harder. Will came up behind  
her and she fought off a scowl.

“If you got lice tell me, before you ruin this perfect hair.” Will said, poking her  
shoulder as he twisted to see if Liliana caught that. She didn’t, and his face sours.  
Lilliana mouthed a thoroughly unapologetic sorry through pants and started up the  
camera. Will grinned at the camera, now all sunshine, and swung the doors open.

c

April gasped at the familiar sight of the interior of the manor, lifting a pale hand to  
cover her mouth. She remembered everything in perfect detail, the wooden banister, the  
way the house’s black walls seemed to eat up all the light, and the furniture, still in  
pristine condition though being abandoned for years on end. This house had made her  
believe in ghosts. No, it wasn’t the absence of dust, nor the eerie shadows playing at  
the edges of her vision, but the events that happened here when she had come here  
with one of her few friends. She wasn’t kidding when she said that some didn’t come  
out. To most people it seemed like a tragic accident, but April knew the truth. Her friend  
didn’t trip, she was pushed.

Will’s heart raced as he stepped in after April. Suddenly unable to crack a joke,  
he could only stand there as Liliana shifted uncomfortably behind him. Though he had  
dozens of visits to places just like this with no problem, and his entire role in the show  
was a witty skeptic, he still couldn’t suppress a thrill of fear traveling up his spine. He  
gulped, breaking out in a cold sweat. What was he thinking? He wasn’t cut out for this,  
he never was. Though all the audience saw was courage, Will really was a coward on  
the inside and he hated it. Liliana cleared her throat, breaking the reverential silence  
filling up the space. Will swallowed again, still unable to conjure up words. There was  
something very wrong with this place.

“Alright, I know it's weird that the outside is all old and crusty but the inside is  
perfect but I really don’t think it warrants this reaction.” Liliana’s brisk voice snapped  
both Will and April out of their thoughts. “Besides, even if this somehow shocks you  
beyond reasoning, I have to do both camera *and* sound so you can suck it up and talk  
for a bit.” Liliana grinned at her tone, loving the shocked expressions on the talents’

2-S-

faces. April lifted a shaky finger at Liliana with a terrified expression. “What? Shocked  
that I finally found my voice? You know, I should have been talent, not you, I can be  
entertaining and- Liliana’s powerful voice was cut off right as it began to rise and she  
dropped to her knees.

April rushed to Liliana’s side, whose mouth foamed as she convulsed on the  
smooth wooden panels of the floor. “Help me!” April screamed at terrified Will. He stared  
in shock at them both, then his eyes wandered up and terror overcame his features.  
Will’s eyes rolled up in his head and he collapsed. April whipped her head up to see a  
ghost.

The apparition was bone white and female. A tattered gray dress floated around  
her, stained with some kind of silver liquid. There was almost a sense of peace to her if  
one didn’t look at her face. The woman’s features were stretched in a horrible scream,  
and silver liquid poured out of her outstretched mouth onto her dress and the floor. The  
woman’s head snapped to the side and she floated forward, stretching her long fingers  
out towards April. April tried to run, but found that she was rooted in place. She  
struggled in vain but slumped over as the woman’s finger made contact with her head.  
Will’s breathing stilled as the ghost touched her finger to his forehead too. Liliana  
stopped thrashing and fell still, at peace. The house became calm, and everything was  
coated in a deadly silence. The bodies of the crew melted into the floor, their souls  
ingrained into the fibers of the house they would now never leave. The woman floated  
above it all, silver liquid still pooling around her.

The woman floated over to the camera and turned it off. She didn’t want any

more visitors. For now.