

Youth Art Day 2020

Division: Literature

Category: Short Story

Grades: 9-12

Ella Seiber

Grade 9

Greenwood High School

Short Story

Henry

1st Place

Mary couldn't do anything but run. If she stopped for one second he would catch her, he would take her away from everything she'd ever known. Running along the dirt road, in the pouring rain, she started to cry. She never would have thought this would happen to anyone, let alone herself.

She heard something snap like a branch, and in a split second she collapsed onto the ground. Throbbing pain quickly crept up her leg and through her entire body. Mary glanced down to see she had stumbled over a ditch and her ankle had snapped. Now she wasn't crying because of fear, but because of the aching pain tormenting her body. She wanted to stop attempting to escape him right then and there. She wanted to give up and let him take her away from everything, but something inside of her told her to keep going.


Harnessing all of her courage, with every muscle of her body in protest, she started to pull herself across the grass and the dirt below her. She passed what seemed to be 20 houses, but in reality she had only made it beyond the second house from where she collapsed. She couldn't go anymore, and Henry was nowhere to be seen. Choosing to make a bold decision, she slowly maneuvered her way to the side of a small house. She ^{lay} laid flat on the ground against the building's wall to increase her camouflage and began to drift away. Her eyelids became heavy weights, and she slowly fell into a restless sleep.

"I'm leaving for work darling, I won't be back for a few days. Stay safe, and please clean up after yourself," Mary's mother hollered through the house. Ever since the war had started, her mother would be gone for days at a time. She worked vigorously day after day to provide for

Mary and herself.

A few seconds after her mother walked out the door, Mary sighed; being alone all the time had worn her down. Her routine was the same everyday, and, for a fifteen year old girl, it was a very mundane life.

She started to walk down the hallway when she heard footsteps coming from upstairs. She stopped suddenly and turned to face the other direction. So many different thoughts **transpired** in her mind, and she slowly started to slink towards the noise. With each step Mary took, she became more intimidated and after many minutes she finally made it to the upper level of the house. Then it came across her that the footsteps didn't come from directly above her.

Thump. Thump. Thump. She heard the steps again, coming from above her head, again.  Regardless of whether she wanted to or not, she had to go to the attic, so she continued to the ladder. She reached up for the string and paused. Did she really want to do this? What was she going to find? The string started to come towards her. While Mary had been **cogitating** on what to do, her hand had subconsciously started to pull the string. Down the ladder began to fall, it felt like pouring rain from the sky as she began to fear the unknown. The steps remained still in front of her, talking her into climbing them.

“Mary,” they taunted, “don’t you want to see?” Knowing she had no other choice, Mary began to climb until her head came through the gap in the ceiling. She took a deep breath, and lifted her eyes into the loft. Nothing appeared to be different, except for the temperature change, which was common since air didn’t circulate well in the attic. She took another step up, then another, and from behind her she heard something move. Before she could look to see what it was, something gagged her mouth shut. Mary stood in terror as she felt heavy breathing on the

back of her neck.

“You never came up here,” rasped a voice, “you never saw me, and you haven’t heard anything odd,” he paused to take a breathe. “I won’t hurt you, as long as you cooperate. You understand?” he waited for a response, but Mary had none to give. She nodded her trembling head more out of fear than of comprehension, and then the gag was released from her face.

Mary’s body trembled and shook as she made her way down the ladder. She didn’t dare turn around to see who her threat was, nor did she try anything sly. She continued down the ladder as casually as she could, and eased it back into its position. The string went back to swaying from the ceiling, and Mary slowly inched her way back downstairs. She passed the parlor with the dusty chairs, and the powder room, then made her way to the open kitchen. She laid her elbows on the shiny, new countertop and placed her head into her sweaty palms. Maybe it was time for her to take an afternoon nap.

When Mary woke up she was still in the kitchen with her head in her hands, and it had become evening. The light was starting to fade from the sky, and long shadows created an eerie glow within the lonely home. She peered up from the counter to see an unclean pot laying in the sink. Rubbing her eyes, she made her way across the room to finish cleaning the dishes. Running water was still a luxury in most parts of the country, but for Mary and her mother, the new house they moved into had the long sought after desire. Mary picked up the pot to begin scrubbing, but when she looked into the base of the dish, she saw something unusual. The words “Turn Around” had been shaped into the bottom of the pot from what appeared to be flour. Mary tested the words. She knew that something would be behind her, whether it be him or something else, she was unsure. He said he wouldn’t hurt her if she cooperated, maybe she would be ok. Turning

around slowly, Mary kept her eyes peeled for anything different. Sure enough, her gaze landed on something ^{lying} laying upon the countertop. A single piece of paper with handwriting had replaced the space where she had been leaning. As she walked over to the paper, her eyes watched everything but the counter. She glanced down the hall, peered through to the parlor, and even checked the pantry. The letter waited for her all the while, and she shouldn't have bothered searching, for she had found nothing.

Mary,

You think you are smart, but I know everything you are going to do before you do it. This might scare you, but don't let it. I don't want to hurt you, I want to help you. I want you to come with me to a new place. I will take care of you in a nice house, just the two of us. You can have everything you've ever dreamed of. We can go out to shows and diners, and you can have lots of friends. All you have to do is come with me. Write your answer on the back. Choose wisely, or you might regret it.

-Henry

P.S. Don't bother looking for me

Mary could not believe her eyes. Not only was her trip to the attic real, but the terrorizing person was, too. He, Henry, was trying to take her away. The reason he wanted to take her she was unsure of, but she was going to figure it out.

Mary read the letter through again, paying attention to how he worded phrases and focusing on what he offered her. It was a very tempting letter, like offering candy to a young

child, but he left out one important detail. The child won't take the candy if it's not the kind they like. Mary didn't enjoy being around people let alone going anywhere that involved them.

Knowing the answer Henry wanted in return, she scrawled the words, "Take me with you," on the back of the paper and left it ^{lie} lay on the counter. She then went back over to the sink to rinse the flour from the pot.

The light began to dwindle now, and a summer storm had started its journey toward Mary. The monstrous grey clouds tried the feeble, new electricity in the house, and Mary knew she would be enshrouded in darkness soon. She turned to go collect candles when she noticed the paper was gone, but the thought of where it went quickly fled her mind when the power began to flicker. She hurried to collect matches from the cupboard and began to light every candle within her view. Room to room she went, and by the time she lit the last candle, the power had given its final glow.

Mary walked back to the kitchen to return the matches to the table. As she came closer to the table, she saw a human figure waver in the candle light. She slowly advanced towards the figure, and then she walked through the doorway. A man was waiting for her. He had an unshaven face, and wore scraggly clothes. He looked no older than 30 as he sat there watching her expression change in the candle lit room.

"Mary, we're leaving tonight," he started talking as if he'd known her since she was little. "The draft is in a day, and I will not allow my name to be written on that paper. Going off to war won't help my sanity, but with you, all will be well." he rambled on, practically talking to himself. Mary used his distraction as an opportunity. She casually walked over to the sink and grabbed the previously washed pan and hid it under the counter. Henry, mumbling to himself all

the while, didn't even notice that she was standing right next to him.

Mary raised her hands above her head with the pan ready for action. She took a deep breathe and brought the pan down hard. Bracing for impact, she closed her eyes, but her hands never stopped moving downward. Something softly bumped her legs. Opening her eyes, she looked at the chair in front of her. It was empty. The pan clattered to the floor. Mary was immobilized by a large body forcing her to remain still.

"I think it's time that we leave. I guess you'll get food when we're home," Henry's voice had transformed into a mean snarl, and Mary knew she was in trouble. He started to push her towards the side door of the house. She struggled to escape him the whole way down the driveway, but she gave up when he just held her tighter. He urged her to walk through the pouring rain of the night for many minutes. On and on they went, never slowing down, and never stopping for breaks. They walked forever, until the train station came into view.

He yanked her to the side of the ticket booth, and began ordering Mary around.

"Don't talk to anyone, don't yell for help, and don't try to run. You'll regret it." His last words were nails stabbing into her. Don't run away... he really thought she would listen. They walked around to the ticket booth, and he asked the salesman for two tickets to Philadelphia Pennsylvania. Mary doubted herself for one last second as she stood beside her opponent in the pouring rain, then, clearing all doubts from her mind, she bolted.

She could hear Henry's shouts behind her, but that couldn't stop her from running. She couldn't give up now.

After running for ten minutes, she could no longer hear him behind her, but she didn't slow down. The slick grass began to grab at Mary's feet, and she was afraid she would never

escape him. Her fears were confirmed when seconds later Mary was sprawled on the ground. She went to stand back up, but her leg buckled beneath her. Choosing her next best option, she started to drag herself across the ground with a now broken ankle. Throbbing pain shot up her leg as she made her first movement, but she continued to pull herself across the soaked ground. She pulled herself past several houses, and then she made the bold choice to stop and hide. The pain stabbing her leg was unbearable. Mary couldn't move another inch of her body. She struggled her way to the side of a small house and ^{lay} laid flat against the building's wall. Hoping she could remain hidden through to the morning, she gave in to a troubled sleep.

Mary's eyes fluttered open to a bright morning sky. The light was covered by a shadow as someone hovered over her. An elderly lady with a soft smile stood above her as she ^{lay} laid there shivering.

"Oh dear. What have we here? Let's get you home child."

Brayden Alexander Miller

Grade 9

Greenwood High School

Short Story

The Final Gasp

2nd Place

The Final Gasp

"I really don't think this is a good idea," said Jimmy.

"This is a great idea," I said. "Once I catch that Loch Ness Monster and prove the media's thesis, I will be famous all over the news!"

"But you could die!" exclaimed Jimmy. "What if you don't come back? I'm gonna think you're dead and then go looking for you and die myself! This is a terrible idea!"

This made me contemplate my choice for a moment but then I remembered about being famous and went back to arguing. Shaking my head, I replied, "Just don't worry about me and if I don't come back, then just forget about me. I'll be fine."

"Whatever..." sulked Jimmy. "I'll just sit here and not sleep until you get back, and worry the whole time. Are you okay with that?"

"Whatever gets me famous!" I exclaimed. "I've always wanted to be famous and I won't give up my chance now."

After saying this, Jimmy stormed out of the room. I started thinking that maybe this wasn't a good idea. But then the other part of me started thinking about getting famous again. I didn't know what to do. I slept on it.

When I woke up the next morning, I was determined for some reason. I was really set on finding this Loch Ness Monster and capturing it. I even had this crazy dream last night about bringing it home then bragging to Jimmy that I caught it and then keeping it in the bathtub. I knew that wasn't gonna happen though. I made my way to the kitchen and Jimmy was sitting there waiting for me.

"Morning sleepy head," said Jimmy, "How'd you sleep?"

"Not too bad," I replied. I got myself a bowl of Fruit Loops while thinking about whether or not I should tell him about the dream. After all, it was the big day and I didn't want to make him any angrier about my adventure.

Jimmy asked, "When are you leaving?"

"Probably in about 30 minutes. I need to get all my scuba gear and make sure everything is ready to go," I answered.

"Congrats! You have officially had your very first good idea!" said Jimmy sarcastically.

When he said this, I could see the sorrow in his face as he stood up to go watch TV. I finished my bowl of cereal and then get ready to leave. I say goodbye to Jimmy and he starts getting emotional for some reason. I forgot that he said this was a bad idea until now. I second guessed myself on my way out the door but then left and headed to get scuba gear.

Shifting
verb
+ noun

After getting scuba gear I headed over to Loch Ness and took a quick glance into the water. I saw something weird towards the middle of the loch and it seemed to be glowing underneath the water. I just figured it was the sun reflecting off the water.

Before getting in the water, after putting my scuba gear on, I looked back at the glowing spot in the water and it didn't seem to have moved at all since the last time I looked at it. This got me a bit worried. I started thinking about things in my head. *What if it's a sign telling me not to do this? What if Jimmy was right? Is this actually a bad idea? Or am I just freaking myself out?* After a couple of minutes I talked myself into jumping into the water and began my search for the monster. The water was very murky and hard to see through. I could only see about 5 feet in front

of me, which scared me due to the fact that the monster could be nearby and I would have no idea unless it is within 5 feet. After about 20 minutes of searching near the surface, I decided to head down lower near the bottom.

Not long after diving down, I noticed a bright light that enabled me to see farther in front of me. When I looked in the direction of the light, I could see everything in between myself and the light source. This intrigued me and caused me to swim towards the light.

I approached the light and saw a hole in the bottom of the loch where the light was shining through. There were things flying into this whole such as fish, sticks, algae, and rocks. As I got closer and closer I started feeling a slight tug. I had no idea what this was, but I was really enticed to see where it went. I tried getting close enough to see out the other side of the hole while staying far enough away so I didn't fly in. The tug was getting stronger and stronger and all of a sudden...
WOOSH!

In through the hole I went. It felt like slow motion. I could see all the sticks and rocks flying around me while I was spinning in circles. I then went flying out of the hole and I was then falling down a waterfall over top of a huge city.

I got to the ground and walked over to a building. Before I got to the building, I came across an arch that seemed to be an entrance. At the top of the arch, it said "Atlantis". This confused me because Atlantis sank underwater and now I am seeing it dry?

I walked over to a building and I saw a sign that says, "If you are reading this, then you have time traveled back to when nobody knew about Atlantis and it was still above water." I didn't know whether to believe this or not.

I walked around some more and then realized I still had my scuba gear on. I took it off and

set it down. I checked the oxygen tank and realized that I only had about 20 minutes of breathing left until it ran out of oxygen. This scared me and made me not want to explore Atlantis. I also remembered about Jimmy waiting for me back home. I would feel so bad if I didn't make it back to him by tonight. As much as I wanted to explore, I didn't. I picked up my scuba gear and made my way back to the waterfall.

On my way back, I noticed someone lying on the ground. I went over to them and they appeared to be dead. They were not breathing and they were wearing scuba gear just like my own. This frightened me even more and made me hurry to the waterfall which was very close at this point.

I finally made it to the waterfall and I put my scuba gear back on. I then attempted to swim back up the cascade. This was a very hard task due to the fact that the water was pushing against me as I swam up. I tried to push my way through but I just couldn't do it. I had to catch my breath and go back down to the ground.

I checked my scuba tank and it said I only had 15 minutes left. I figured I had to act now and fast so I started making my way back up the waterfall. The fatigue this time got to me a lot more than last time. I went back down and checked the tank again. 10 minutes. I started yet again and this time I made it farther up and this gave me hope. But I had to go back down. 5 minutes.

This time I was more determined than ever. I knew if I didn't get up on this try, I was stuck here forever. I pushed through with everything I had and I was three-fourths of the way up when it hit me again. I kept pushing upward and eventually I made it to the hole that sucked me in. This was the easiest part because it started sucking me up and into the hole again. I made it to the bottom of the loch and I swam as far away from the hole as possible.

I was still at the bottom of the loch when I realized that my oxygen tank was now empty. I started freaking out so I held my breath and took the scuba gear off. The loch was extremely deep so I knew I had to start swimming up immediately. I started making my way up but I started going unconscious only about one-fourth of the way up. One of the last things I remembered was seeing a large figure coming towards me. I didn't know what it was though.

"Wake up!" yelled Jimmy. "Felix! Wake up!"

I opened my eyes and my head hurt and my vision was blurry. I saw what looked like a caricature of Jimmy. But then my vision cleared up and I realized it was actually him. "Where am I?" I asked.

"We are at Loch Ness. You went unconscious and the Loch Ness Monster carried you to the surface. I came here to see if you were okay and the monster was sitting here beside you," explained Jimmy.

"Where is it?!" I asked, "I need to go catch it!" I jumped up and started towards the loch and Jimmy grabbed me by the shoulder and pulled me back.

"What on earth are you doing?!" yelled Jimmy.

I responded, "I will become famous no matter the cost. I'm going back in there and I don't care what you say."

"Felix!" exclaimed Jimmy, "Please don't!"

I breathed in a huge gasp of air and jumped back into the water. As soon as I opened my eyes, I saw it. Right in front of me. There I was, face to face with the Loch Ness Monster.

Riley Danko

Grade 9

Greenwood High School

Literature

Hayride or DIE

3rd Place

Hayride or DIE

'Twas the night before Halloween when all through the corn, Pinky the Clown's heart was still torn. Pinky the Clown loved Halloween, so much, in fact, that he worked at a haunted hayride attraction! And although he loved Halloween, his heart still belonged to his high school sweetheart, his everything, the only girl he has ever loved, Anna. Pinky loved Anna so much that when she broke his heart, he couldn't even unfollow her Instagram.

Anna was everyone's friend, everyone just loved Anna. She was the pretty friend, the one that everyone couldn't wait to spend time with. She had just celebrated her birthday and decided that she wanted to try out the new tourist attraction to celebrate with a group of her best friends. When it started to get dark, around 8:00, Anna and her two friends were going to head to Ride or DIE, the new haunted hayride attraction in town.

"Hey girls! What do you think about heading over to the hayride tonight? I'll pick you up at 7:45 at the Sunoco in town?" Anna wrote in the group chat.

"Sounds good, I can't wait! I heard that they have some of the best actors in town and there are so many cool props. One of my friends told me they chase you with chainsaws, but without the chains, of course." replied Anna's best friend, Maria.

"I'm here for the thrill...see you girls soon!" Anna's other friend, Rachel, responded.

Anna followed her promise and picked up Maria and Rachel at 7:45 before heading for the night of their lives at Ride or DIE. When she picked them up, they took a selfie and posted it on all of their Instagram accounts with the caption, "Off to Ride or DIE to celebrate! So excited. Love

these girls!”

Upon arrival at Ride or DIE, they were greeted by a clown right away. That same clown had followed their social media activity and knew when they had arrived on site. The clown was wearing an all pink costume, but what they didn't know was that they knew the guy behind the mask. And he was out to gratify his broken heart.

As soon as they entered into the attraction, Anna, Maria, and Rachel were all in agreement to grab a bite to eat before taking on the hayride. While they were waiting in line for their chicken fingers, they realized that the clown followed them to the line, and then the picnic table. Anna and Maria thought this to be a little strange, but Rachel tried to comfort them by letting them know that it was probably just part of the thrill; after all, there were multiple clowns wandering around the food court.

The girls finished up their dinner, the sky was pitch black, and this could only mean one thing...hayride time!

The three girls were loaded up on the wagon that was stationed in the lightless, dusty barn that was closed in by garage doors. The tension started to travel through the barn as they all waited patiently for the opportunity to start the hayride. Finally, they heard the door in front of them start to open, however, the opening didn't bring much light. Before long, they heard a slew of sounds in the distance--obtrusive screams of horror, the firing up of chainsaws, and the wind blowing ferociously through the cornfield.

“Do you hear that?” Anna whispered alarmed.

“It sounds like a human cry!” exclaimed someone on the back of the wagon.

“This is definitely creepy if that's what they're going for.” Maria remarked.

“I’m getting a funny feeling. Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea, girls. We should try to elude this wagon as soon as possible, I don’t trust what I’m hearing.” Anna suggested.

As the wagon proceeded on, Anna gained a deeper gut feeling that something was off in the air surrounding her. She had been to haunted hayrides before, but none that had the feeling that this one brought her. She felt a sense of panic, no, rather a sense of terror.

CRUNCH!

Suddenly from the cornfield, popped out a tall figure that stood in the darkness of the night. The faint sound of the chainsaw grew closer as it started. Those on the wagon were rushed over with fear, not knowing what was going to happen next, not wanting to know either.

The sound of the chainsaw was too close for comfort. The person holding it was now approaching the wagon...on the back of the wagon...the middle...right behind Anna, Maria, and Rachel. Before they could think twice, the screams of the wagon’s passengers overwhelmed the silence of the night. Anna felt something sharp touch her back, then she realized she couldn’t move.

“STOP! STOP! STOP!” Maria and Rachel screamed in harmony.

The screams around her faded into the darkness of the twilight while blood poured out of her like rain; her body lay there as still as the full moon resting above in the sky.