



# Eleven Tales



written by students from  
SUPER SUMMER  
*"The Art of Writing"* class

LANGUAGE LINK

Hanoi, August 2010



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Editor:

Jed Mclean

LANGUAGE LINK 2010

# Contents

THE MYSTERY OF RED SKULL MANSION _____	by Dang Minh Quang	P7
DESTINY _____	by Tran Pham Cam Uyen	P11
SCARY ACADEMY _____	by Ngo Phuong Hanh	P 15
SICKY mCBEER THE NAM WHO DRANK BEER WHEN HE WAS SICK _____	by Tran Nhat Hoang	P 17
IRREGULAR LICE _____	by Tran Nhat Anh	P 19
SUPERCAT _____	by Do Minh Hanh	P 23
THE HEART OF THE STONE _____	by Trinh Kieu Mi	P 26
HEAVEN IS HEAR _____	by Nguyen Hai Vy	P 30
THE FINAL MATCH _____	by Pham Hong Thanh An	P 32
THE GAME _____	by Pham Quynh Trang	P 36
DANGEROUS _____	by Hoang Linh Chi	P 41

# Introduction

*The second Language Link "Art of Writing" course ran for 6 weeks during the summer of 2010. The objective of the course was for each student to produce a short story for a book. Over six weeks the students explored the 'mechanics' of story telling. This included: looking at different story genres and their styles, basic story structures, plot development, literary themes, creating characters, and the use of dialogue. To this they added their own imaginations and experiences.*

*The stories they produced cover a range of genres and reflect their own personal interests: family drama, detective, fairytale, and fantasy. The stories also tackle a number of themes familiar to most readers of books: the bonds of friendship and family, love and sacrifice, the dangers of obsession and selfishness.*

*Throughout the course the authors produced and explored many ideas relating to each course topic. The students were then able to work some of these ideas into their final story. An important part of this process was learning to produce constructive criticism. Stories and ideas were constantly shared for 'peer review', and written feedback given to each story's author. This not only helped story development but provided the students with an insight into their own creative process.*

*It was rewarding for me to watch and help these young authors 'voice' their imaginations. Some of the ideas and themes discussed during the course were surprisingly mature and sophisticated for such young writers. Finally, for me it was incredibly humbling experience to see them create and deliver these excellent stories in a second language.*

JED MCLEAN, TEACHER



# AUTHORS



## Authors

### DANG MINH QUANG (age 12)

Quang's thoughtful nature reflects his love of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Shinichi Kudo, and he's produced a detective story that includes one his heroes- Sherlock Holmes. He likes to watch action movies and listen to old composers like Bach and Mozart. He says most of the day he tries to behave like an adult but doesn't like adult 'stuff'. He's not vegetarian but hates meat, especially 'pig'.

### TRAN PHAM CAM UYEN (age 14)

Uyen describes herself as a strange and moody person. She says her 'obsessions' are: high-tech gadgets, classical music, and books. She's proud of her family, especially her younger brother. This is reflected in her imaginative fantasy story about the bond between two brothers, and their sacrifices. She hopes readers will understand her story and its themes.

### NGO PHUONG HANH (age 11)

Hanh thinks that although her writing isn't so good its fun – it lets you share your ideas. During the course, Hanh's stories and ideas were usually inspired by traditional fairy tales and then mixed with more modern elements. One of her stories involved the traditional characters from 'Little Red Riding Hood' and a hip hop club. Her story here however is more traditional in style, involving lonely orphan children coming together to defeat child-eating witches.

### TRAN NHAT HOANG 'FRANKLIN' (age 8)

Hoang was the class's youngest member and most prolific story writer. Hoang was born in Canada and recently spent 3 years living in San Francisco. His American friends call him Franklin. He produced many imaginative stories during the course, any of which might have made it into this collection. His constant complaint was that my editing speed and skills were no match for his 'genius'. He says his story doesn't have a happy ending because he's trying to scare people into not drinking beer.

### TRAN NHAT ANH 'ANGELA' (age 11)

Anh, A.K.A. Angela, is Hoang's very confident older sister and has also spent time in San Francisco. The theme of Angela's story is you shouldn't continue to be selfish if you want to improve your circumstances, or you'll be 'out of the frying pan and into the fire'. In her free time she likes to drink orange juice and chat to her American friends on-line – whom she misses very much. She says she has a question for the world, "can we stop pollution, and use less electricity if you don't need it?"

### DO MINH HANH (age 11)

Hanh's love of animals, especially cats, was the inspiration for her story. Supercat is the tale of a naughty but much loved cat who learns to be less selfish. In her spare time she likes playing piano and listening to music. She doesn't know why she studied in the writing class because she wants to be an artist. Oh, and she hates football. Really hates it.

### TRINH KIEU MI (age 13)

Mi says she loves many things: listening to music, riding her bike early in the morning, sunrises and sunsets, but most of all, writing. In the future she wants to be both a scientist (at NASA) and a writer. She says the best thing about being a writer is you can write about the truth. She joined the course because she wanted to write a story by herself and have it put in a book. Her story is a very moving look at the love between mother and daughter. The theme of her story is "love conquers all".

## ■ NGUYEN HAI VY (age 12)

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*The very enthusiastic Vy produced a number of good stories during the course, a number of which were censored for the over-use of the word 'poop'. Her final story is the tale of an unhappy man who learns to appreciate his life. She's looking forward to becoming a teenager because she thinks it's the best years of your life. However, and to the dismay of this editor (aged 39), she doesn't see the point of living after you're thirty.*

## ■ PHAM HONG THANH (age 14)

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*Anh's love of football and this years World Cup were the inspiration for his story about an under 15s World Cup final. With a less strict editor I'm sure his story would have been a 500 page second-by-second commentary of a very exciting football match. Anh, however, has produced a story about a team that when facing disaster, pulls together and plays for their beloved coach.*

## ■ PHAM QUYNH TRANG (age 14)

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*It was surprising to find the usually mild-mannered Trang, after exploring more pleasant topics, writing such a chilling story for this collection. The story includes a number a familiar motifs from the horror genre: an old mansion, magical mirrors, The Devil, and mazes. She conveys a growing feeling of helplessness as her main characters optimistically play a game with The Devil.*

## ■ HOANG LINH CHI (age 14)

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*During the course, Chi probably worked harder on other people's stories than on her own. She provided great written feedback on ideas and storylines. Her own story went through a lot of changes before she finally decided on the detective genre. Chi likes listening to many kinds of music and gossiping with her friends in class.*

# The mystery of Red Skull mansion

*By Dang Minh Quang (age 12)*

Victor was one of the most famous detectives in England in the 19th century. Many famous people knew him, like Queen Victoria, and the greatest detective of all time, Sherlock Holmes. Victor lived at 212 Baker Street, near where Holmes and doctor Watson lived. He often visited Holmes for advice, and worked with the police in Scotland Yard.

One day, there was an emergency call for Victor. A man had been killed in Nottingham, at a mansion called: 'The Red Skull'. The victim's name was John Brown. His maid had realised that Mr Brown hadn't taken his heart medicine, so she'd gone to his room and found him dead and the room on fire. She'd then ran out of the house and called the police immediately. After the fire had been put out, they'd found a knife and some blood in John Brown's room.

By the time Victor arrived, the police had captured a man. A policeman said angrily:

"We don't need you any more. This is the killer. I guess you know Walter Harry, the man who robbed the Royal Bank. He has just been released from prison."

The man, frightened, shouted, "You have to believe me. I don't kill people."

"Don't lie to us. Your fingerprints are on the knife. A knife which is covered in the blood of John Brown. And your fingerprints are on a cupboard which had money inside. So, you came back here to steal money again, isn't that right?"

Victor asked, "He stole from here once before?"

"Yes, right before he was caught outside the Royal Bank."

Walter screamed, "No, no!"



Victor looked at the man. His complexion had turned pale, and he fell down on the floor.

Over the next few days, Victor couldn't find anything that could help him with the investigation. The local police had given him a map of the house and he visited many times. When he asked the police about things that had happened when John Brown died, they just laughed at him. He talked to the maid, and the way she talked was very strange. She just talked about useless things and didn't talk much about what had happened. When Victor reminded her about Walter's face, she thought Walter was absolutely innocent. Victor knew that you couldn't trust people just on how they looked. But he still trusted his instincts, and they were telling him Walter Harry was innocent.

Also, he'd found another mystery. The fingerprints on the knife and cupboard were not clear. Victor was sure that they were not clear because they'd been copied from paper. The technology to do this had just been created by a scientist. But there was no evidence to prove it. For that to happen, Victor had to find an old friend -Sherlock Holmes. Although Holmes was a famous detective, strangely no one had seen him for nearly two years. There was just 4 days left before Walter had to go to prison and receive his punishment: death.

It was raining in London. All the sky was covered by dark clouds. There was nobody on the streets. After a few days of hot weather, everything now swam under the fresh rain. But there was someone who didn't care about that as he walked quietly along the dark streets. Finally, he found the house he needed. He walked slowly to the door and opened it. The inside of Sherlock Holmes's house was quite beautiful. All the furniture was still new, but covered in dust. Holmes's favourite sofa lay on the floor, empty. Detective Victor looked around for nearly 2 hours before he accepted that Holmes hadn't left any messages for him.

While he was walking back down the streets, something heavy, a sadness, covered his body. There was no hope. It felt like some kind of evil had gone to his head. Usually, when it was important to do so, he always found out the truth. But now, he could not save Walter, and he couldn't find Sherlock Holmes. He walked slowly to his big and luxurious house. Normally, he felt happy when he looked at the house. But now, the house looked

unattractive and ugly. He opened the door and went inside. The first thing that attracted his attention was a small piece of paper. He picked it up. There was only one word on the paper: 'Structure'. What did that mean? Or, maybe, that was the answer...

'Knock knock...' Victor was standing in front of John Brown's house. The door opened. The maid asked, "Why are you here? What do you want?" But Victor immediately walked into the house without permission. He looked at the map of the house. Something was strange. The numbers...the structure of two stairs...the missing numbers...

So, finally, the truth. Victor knew now, that Walter was innocent. The person who stood behind all this was clever, but now he was going to pay for what he did. Suddenly, Victor ran upstairs. He needed to find someone.

Victor arrived at Scotland Yard. When he came through the door, all the police looked at him suspiciously. Then their faces turned red when they saw the man with him. The detective just smiled, and sat on the nearest chair.

Then, he greeted everyone: "Hello. Let me introduce the most important witness in this case, Mr. John Brown.

John Brown just stood there. Although he was short and wiry, he was frightening to look at: his face looked like a rat's, and he was shaking like an animal caught in a leopard's cave. But the police were staring at Victor, who was explaining about the case:

"This guy is clever. A scientist has just written a paper about fingerprint copying technology, and his invention was recently stolen. John Brown used it to put a copy of Walter's fingerprints on the cupboard and knife. He then hid in a secret room. When I looked at a map of the house, I found some floor space on the second floor was missing. Is this is revenge for the robbery two years ago, John?"

The police had listened very closely to the story, and when Victor finished, they smiled.

"Fantastic. Once again, you have helped us."

"No, not me. Someone helped me. I wish I know who it was."

"You don't need to wish. Here I am."

Victor looked around and saw Sherlock Holmes standing there; he was being helped by doctor Watson. He looked older than the last time they had met, and his hair had a little grey in it.

Holmes smiled, "Good job, Victor! I knew you could do it!"

"You helped me?"

"Yes. Doctor Watson helped me put the paper in your house."

"Where have you been?"

"It's a long story, one of my cases. I was shot by a killer, and couldn't give you more help."

Victor and all the police smiled. But, suddenly, John Brown whispered:

"Please, it was just joke."

A policeman growled: "Shut up! You tried to kill Walter Harry. You will pay by law."

The next day, all the newspapers had the headline: 'Rich businessman tries to kill innocent people'. But the best news was that Sherlock Holmes was back. The immortal detective had risen up again. ●



## Destiny

By Tran Pham Cam Uyen (age 14)

One day, a long forgotten magical land awoke from a long sleep. In this marvellous place, nothing was impossible. You could see strange creatures and beings: unicorns, mermaids, elves, wizards; and magical woods with singing flowers, dancing trees, and talking animals. Walking in the old quarter of its royal city you could feel the music of many musical instruments - pianos, organs, flutes, trumpets - spilling into the air. You could smell the best foods - bread, honey, wine, cheese - and the smell would make you feel hungry. Or while coming across the magical market, you could touch the softest cloth, buy a flying rug, or try the sweet taste of magical candies. The sun always shone brightly and the atmosphere made you want to sing. A happy-ever-after land with no war, and no crime. However, there was a prophecy that said this magical land's destiny and future would be dark.

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No one knew about the unfortunate situation that was happening in the royal family. No one knew what the king, Arnold Gram, had done 40 years ago. No one realized that the death of the famous grand duke, Franklin Rothschild, hadn't just been an accident. He had been murdered - and King Gram was the murderer. He'd never revealed his secret to anyone - not even the queen. But he'd forgotten about one of the oldest magical laws: If a royal person committed a crime, he or she wouldn't have to pay for it, another person in the family would have to take the responsibility. King Gram had killed a grand duke, and now his son - Dennis Gram, one of the royal twins - would be the curse's victim.

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Dennis was walking through the shadows of the trees in the last of the daylight. The sky was getting darker, he could feel a cold wind blow on his face, and tangle his hair. The sound of the rustling leaves, and creaking trees

panicked him. He realized that these things were the signs. The signs of a coming nightmare. He paled and his heart began to pound quickly.

Ever since he'd been born, he'd been having the nightmares. But nobody knew about his special gift, even him. Dennis' dreams usually came true, his dreams showed him the future. Dennis took a deep breath, and walked back to the castle in the fiery-red light of the setting sun. The young prince didn't know that tonight, sleep would bring his truly worst nightmare.

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Not far away, in the royal gardens, sat a young couple.

"Isn't this sunset romantic, honey? And look at the flowers. They are as beautiful as you!" Danny blinked at his lover and smiled a warm smile.

Anne was shy. Her cheeks turned red. She couldn't think of anything to say.

"Anne, I will tell my parents about us, so they can accept our love. But now, I want to ask you one thing".

Anne was surprised. She wondered what was so important and serious.

Suddenly, Danny knelt to the ground. In his big hand, there was a small, but very sophisticated sparkling diamond ring. Anne was amazed by Danny's actions.

"I swear I will love you until death takes me away from you. Will you marry me, Anne Rothschild?"

Danny had just proposed to her! Her mind was shaking, she had never felt this way before. After a while, finally, she replied clearly:

"I will, Danny."

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Dennis was woken up by his own scream. He was bathed in perspiration. He just couldn't believe what he'd seen in his dream. It hadn't been a normal nightmare. Usually Dennis had bad visions about other people - never about himself. He'd seen himself killed by a girl who loved him, and she was a girl he loved dearly. The young prince had also heard a strange voice: "Remember, you can't runaway from your destiny!" He knew the dream had

been a warning. He felt like he was stuck in a maze with no way out, and if he couldn't escape, he would die.

Dennis was scared and exhausted. In such a desperate situation he had to think of a desperate solution. An indefinite thought ran through his mind. After a while, he got out of bed and went to the magical wood to find a witch.

The deeper he went into the wood, the more mysterious it became. After a he'd been walking for a long time, he found himself standing in front of a giant nest. Before he could open his mouth to call the witch's name, the door was opened by an old lady. Dennis told her about his nightmare and asked her for a way out. The witch thought for a minute, then walked back inside.

She finally returned with a potion bottle. She explained: "If you drink this red liquid, you forget about the existence of love."

Dennis accepted the bottle and drank it very quickly, "So sweet, it's just like sugar." Then Dennis felt that his heart was freezing, he couldn't feel any emotion. "This does work, doesn't it? Now I can't love anybody. That means nobody will love me too. From now on, I'm safe."

But Dennis had forgotten a very important thing: He couldn't runaway from his destiny.

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Time passed slowly. Although he sometimes still had the same nightmare, two weeks later Dennis was still alive. He shook his head, and tried to erase all thought in his mind. "I have to go now or I'll be late," Dennis sighed and walked out. Today was a very special and important day. He was on his way to the royal church for his twin brother's wedding.

The sun was shining brightly and the birds were singing. Danny and Anne, hand-in-hand, were standing together in the church surrounded by flowers. The wedding was huge, and of course expensive: Flowers, candles, music...all the things that reminded us about such a happy moment. They looked at each other and smiled. Everyone in the church could see the happiness in their eyes. But when Dennis stared at Anne,

he suddenly understood everything clearly. He knew that he had to act fast or everything would turn into disaster.

He ran to the chancel steps and hid behind a big bunch of flowers. No one could see him, but now Dennis could see 'himself' very clearly. He knew that the potion hadn't worked because he still loved someone, and he would sacrifice his life for that person.

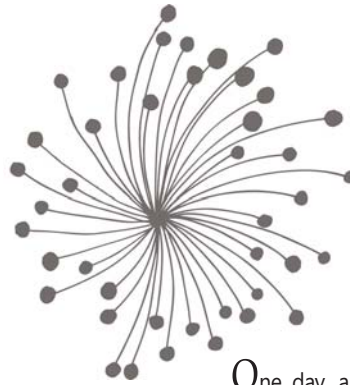
Dennis waited in silence. When the vicar started reading the marriage oaths he saw the light of steel. With lightening speed, Dennis jumped between Danny and Anne. He could feel warm liquid flowing out of his body. Anne was pale, staring in surprise, holding a carving knife. His chest, no, his heart was bleeding. He'd been just in time to save his brother.

Dennis was lying in his twin's arms, "Danny, she is our enemy. She is Franklin Rothschild's daughter. Her father was killed by our father. She wanted revenge in front of all these people.

"Danny, you have to trust me. I was chosen to pay for our father's crime. I had a vision I would be killed by a girl who loved me. But I made a mistake because we look the same – we are TWINS. This is my destiny. I've realized that I was born to sacrifice myself for you. We can't runaway from our destiny, you know. Goodbye."

Dennis took his last breath. Then, he was gone. Untroubled, happy.

In the church, everything was chaotic. Because of his dreams, Dennis had known the kingdom would have a dark future for a time, because his death would be the saddest moment this world would ever go through-the death of a prince. But he'd also known that one day, when Danny ran the kingdom, it would get better. Anne would be forgiven by Danny, and she would forget about her vengeance, her hatred. She would become a great queen. He'd understood that, love, between people in a family could conquer all. Even magic. ●



## Scary Academy

*By Ngo Phuong Hanh (age 11)*

One day, a strange school 'appeared' in the city. It was a school for orphans- children without a family. The city had many orphans, so the school soon had lots of pupils -including me. There were four teachers at the school: Ms Gluck, Ms Sugar, Ms Much, and Ms Bane. Although the teachers were very nice to us, we thought they were a little weird. For example, they didn't like the pupils to play games and talk together. So many of us were very lonely at the school.

One night, when we were sleeping in the school dorm, Bill, Ms. Glucks' son, heard strange noises. He went quietly downstairs and saw a student looking very white and scared. Then he heard a voice, "We'll eat these kids first, and then those upstairs tomorrow. Students are so delicious." Then he heard other voices laughing.

Bill went quickly and quietly upstairs to the dorm room. "Guys! Girls!" whispered Bill, waking us up.

"What's the matter, Bill?" I said.

"Yeah, what's the matter?" said Penny.

"Shush. They'll hear us!" Bill checked the door. "Listen, the teacher's are witches, even my mum. They're going to eat you!"

"What? Witches?" everyone shouted.

"Shush, stop shouting!" Bill told us about the student, and what he had heard.

We decided to make a plan, and stayed up most of the night. "Will it work?" worried Grace, as we were getting back into bed.

"Yes, believe me, it'll work. We just have to work together," I said.

"Yeah!" everybody said.

The next morning, just as we expected, Ms Bane came into the classroom and said: "Pupils! Quiet please! I would like you all to go to the school garage. I'll meet you there. Hurry now."

After she had gone, I said, "Ok, everyone know what they're doing? This is not a practice. Remember, get their wands. Come on, lets go."

So, we ran to the garage and attacked the waiting teachers. Nicky and Bill threw a table and chair at Ms Bane and knocked her out. I put banana peels on the floor and Ms Much slipped and broke her wand. Grace had a bow, and shot an arrow into Ms Sugar's hand. "ouch! My hand! Oh no, my wand!"

Grace picked up the wands and the teachers all froze. Except Ms Gluck, who was turning Bill into a mouse so she could put him in a pot.

"No! You will never eat him," shouted Penny, and she threw a pair of shoes at Ms Gluck. As Ms Gluck turned and tried to catch the shoes, Bill the mouse escaped from his evil and nasty mother. But Ms. Gluck still had her wand.

"Hey Bill," Said Penny, " I have an idea." She quickly whispered something to the little mouse. Bill ran over to Ms Gluck and crawled up her trouser leg.

"That tickles!" she screamed, and fell over laughing.

"Great, now it's my turn," said Penny, picking up the wand. She stood on Ms Glucks head and turned her into a pig.

Everybody cheered. "We did it!" All the pupils ran from the school as quickly as they could. Not long after, the school disappeared as mysteriously as it had appeared.

We are adults now, and all have our own families. But we have remained friends since that day, and live for each other like a family. ●

## Sicky Mcbeer the man who drank beer when he was sick

*By Tran Nhat Hoang (age 8)*

Although Sicky Mcbeer was a very sick man, nobody could fix him because he drank too much beer. He always wore a hat, looked like he never slept and walked like a wobbly noodle. He had strange huge hands from smashing beer bottles while he drank them in a rush. Also, he was always spilling beer on his clothes and shoes- he thought the smell was like a beautiful perfume!

Everyday, he would wake up and drink until there was no beer left in the house. Then, in the evenings, he often slept in the last place he had been standing -which was usually at the refrigerator drinking his beer. He would even risk his life for beer, and he often said if he died his spirit would still be able to drink.

Whenever Sicky had emotions, beer cleared them away -even when he thought he might be happy.

One day, he became so obsessed with beer he kicked his wife out of the house and got a big beer bottle as a replacement. Then he had a wedding party, alone with his new big bottle. Each day, he fell more and more in love with beer, until he finally kicked out his children too, and got small beer bottles as replacements. He now spent most his time holding and kissing his family of bottles.

Sicky had kept his wife's wallet when he kicked her out, and now he thought, "I think I'm going to spend her money wisely." But he didn't. That Thanksgiving, he spent it all on beer-turkeys. So he ended up in the middle of Washington DC begging people for money.

Then one day, an idea came into his head: "I will make a TV show! The show will be about a pirate who attacks ghosts. People love pirates and ghosts." Then he smiled, "And the pirate will kill with beer bottle hands. People will love the violence."

The show was a big success and the whole continent loved it. It made Sicky so rich he bought a mansion and a bodyguard.

Soon after, his human family found out and hated him even more. They made a plan to get revenge: They would hide inside a beer bottle costume carrying a bomb, get delivered to Sicky's mansion, then sneak out and leave the bomb under his bed. "Can't fail," said his wife to their children.

But when Sicky saw the beer bottle on his doorstep, he smashed it open to drink in a rush. But all he found was his family. He became very angry, because he hated them too. He made a terrible face, set the bomb for one second, and let them hold it. He went into his mansion and his family went to Mars.

Sicky sat on his bed, in his non-bombed house, smiling. Suddenly, his bedroom door smashed open! Standing there, smiling greedily, was The Taxman.

The Taxman said, "You owe me \$999,999,999.000".

But Sicky had 'hired' a policeman to protect him. He came and threw The Taxman out. From then on, Sicky lived happily ever after.

His real family, unfortunately, did not. They became the minions of aliens on mars, who forced them to do slave work. They were told that they would be thrown into the sun unless they made alien beer. They lived poorly until the day they died. ●

## Irregular Lice

*By Tran Nhat Anh (age 11)*

Long ago, there lived a coloured kind of lice group called Rainbow lice. They were the oldest living lice group and were the last generation of Rainbow lice. These lice could live in any kind of hair; slippery or not. They looked like jellybeans, but with sticks for arms and legs. Although they wanted to stay in one place, they were often in danger, and had to keep moving. However, if they had to move heads for a 10th time, they would become tired, and often die. The head our group were on - at the time of this story- was head number seven.

These lice were special. They could do irregular things that normal lice couldn't. They could talk.... like this...

"Lice!!!" Louse Newspaper screamed. "Head number seven is going to spray us with lice killing spray! We must leave now!" Louse Newspaper was actually a black and white louse, who loved to read newspapers to keep track of heads. He was a jellybean, too.

"Okey Dokey!" Louse Blue exclaimed.

"We've already packed up!" Louse Orange said. He shared suitcases with Louse Blue because they were best friends.

After about five minutes, everybody had finished packing up, but then continued to do what they usually always did: Louse Red listened to his iPod, Louse Orange played basketball with Louse Blue, Louse Yellow sucked on stuff like garbage, and Louse Green led the way at sucking blood.

Louse Newspaper sighed and took his FHF (Furry Head Finder) machine and looked for 'furballs' - suitable human heads. Usually, nobody would do anything without blood first, but all Louse Newspaper cared about was his next home... and everybody else's, too.

"Let's go!" Louse Newspaper said. "Head number seven will squirt us with spray in five seconds, let's leave!!!"

"No need to scream at us!" everyone shouted back. Everybody started running for their lives, trying to find a way to get down. Normal lice usually jump to another head and continue sucking blood. Rainbow lice, however, would never do that because jellybeans get squished easily.

Head number seven let out her arm and let the lice slide down.

"Better watch out." Head number seven said. "Next time you crawl on my hair, I will squirt you before you escape!"

Using the FHF machine they followed Louse Newspaper all the way to Liverpool. Of course, animal 'furballs' would work as a home and were easier to find, but they usually scratched out Rainbow lice too easily. Human heads were far safer, but more difficult to get to.

After they had been wandering around Liverpool a while, the group turned to Louse Newspaper.

"I can't find the head." Louse Red pointed out.

"Neither can I," Louse Orange screamed.

"Me neither," Louse Yellow said angrily.

"Who can?" Louse Green asked.

"Definitely not me," Louse Blue said.

"I agree," Louse Purple agreed.

"Hey!" Louse Newspaper was furious, "I am not a rainbowed-lice and you're making me angry by speaking in a rainbow's order of colour -red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple. I feel left out!"

"I am not a rainbow member either!" Louse Brown and Pink said angrily.

"What about it?" Louse Yellow said. "What's your point?! STOP shouting YOU BIG @&!^#\*!"

Louse Red hated arguments so he took out his iPod again, and then everybody did what they would usually do on a head.

"Are we going to find a head?" Louse Orange asked. "If we are just going to do our normal activities on a street, how about we find a box for a home?"

"Yeah!" The whole group chanted except Louse Newspaper. "We are not normal lice! We are going to make history! We don't need blood! We can eat normal old trash! Let's stand up for it."

"Wow," Louse Newspaper gaped. "I am so surprised, you guys have so much dignity, let's go find a box."

Eventually, they found an abandoned brown box and made a comfortable home there. It was way more relaxing and peaceful than a normal head. The Rainbow lice spent their days doing what they usually did- except this time, Louse Green couldn't lead the dangerous blood sucking.

One day, however, a mouse holding a can of "Lice Killer" appeared. It didn't know what to do with the spray - it thought it was perfume- and sprayed it everywhere in the box.

"Ahhh!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" Louse Blue screamed, "Let's get out of here!" All the lice sprang out and jumped to the nearest head.

"Our beautiful home!" Louse Newspaper cried.

"Hey," Louse Purple felt strange. "This head is so messy and stinky and ugly, yet....relaxing."

"Definitely!" "Absolutely!" the other lice shouted -but not in rainbow order this time. Louse Newspaper was pleased with their good manners and had to agree.

"AHM!!!!!!" Head number eight said. "What do you think you are doing in my clean, beautiful hair?"

"AHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" The lice screamed. "This isn't safe!"

"Um, it's actually mmmpphh!!" Louse Yellow was about to say ugly and stinky... but Louse Green covered his mouth.

"We needed a home," Louse Green said. "Can your hair be our home?"

"Will you suck my blood?" The hairy man said suspiciously.

"No," Louse Green promised, hoping he wouldn't notice he was lying.

"Okay. Fine."

"Hallelujah!" Louse Newspaper jumped up and down. "Remember we are irregular lice, we don't need blood. We have dignity, and we keep our promises."

The lice celebrated with a picnic of hair trash and fake beer -which was actually water- and then everyone did what they usually did.

When it was blood sucking time, Louse Green did what he usually did and greedily led the way. As they all drank blood the man's head became very itchy, and he began to scratch. He scratched and scratched with his sharp fingernails until many of them were dead. Louse Newspaper shouted, "Stop!"

Only Louse Orange and Louse Blue had survived. They waited for more scratching but the man had stopped. The coloured centres of their friends oozed around them, and the last three Rainbow Lice in the world cried.

A little while later, they were sat together quietly. "Hey," Louse Newspaper said sadly, "I think we need to learn how to be nice to people."

"yes, definitely, and to stop telling lies and being selfish," the others agreed.

"Or we'll be 'out of the frying pan and into fire' again and again." •



## Supercat



By Do Minh Hanh (age 11)

Jimmy had a cat named Luke. Luke was a lovely but very naughty cat. He was always scratching the sofa, stealing food, and biting Jimmy and his family. Jimmy didn't know what to do. His family wanted to give Luke away or send him to a cat prison.

However, one day, when Jimmy was feeding Luke, he accidentally gave him some food mixed with a special potion. This potion had special ingredients.

Suddenly, Jimmy's dad -a scientist- asked Jimmy, "Have you seen my potion?"

"What potion?" Jimmy replied. "It wasn't in a brown glass, was it?"

"Yes, what have you done with it?"

"Nothing," said Jimmy, worried.

"It's a potion which makes it's drinker 'super'," his dad said seriously.

"Oh no! I gave it to Luke." Jimmy and his dad quickly went to find Luke.

"Yeah, I'm a super cat!" Jimmy and his dad looked up to find Luke flying around, talking to himself. "I can do anything I want!"

"Hey, Luke," Jimmy shouted, "it was a potion in your food, its changed you! Please come down you naughty cat."

"Maybe the potion has made me better," Luke shouted back as he flew around. "Now, I am Supercat!" Laughing, Luke flew around the room breaking furniture.

"Don't worry," said Jimmy's dad, "it will stop working in a few days."

Sometime later, they all heard a cry for help. Luke stopped what he was doing - scratching the ceiling - and listened carefully. He flew out the window and followed the voice to an office building.

"Who could be screaming like that," he thought. He sneaked into an office and the saw a screaming girl. Next to her was a man with a gun.

The man laughed, "Quiet, you are scaring me!"

"What? I'm not scaring you, and I'm not scared of you, E. Guy," she shouted.

"But you're screaming, so you must be scared of me, right?"

"So, his name is E. Guy," Luke thought.

"I'll never be scared of you," she cried, "and I'll defeat you."

Luke flew over, broke a post in half, and threw it at E. Guy. The gun broke, and a surprised E. Guy ran. He stopped and shouted, "I'll get my revenge, just you wait!"

The young woman stood up. "Thanks for helping me. My name is Sally." She smiled and looked closely at the cat that had rescued her.

"Nevermind that, who is E. Guy?" said Luke rudely. He'd never met a pretty girl before.

Shocked, she replied, "He's a criminal. I'm a super-spy. He attacked our office and tried to take me away."

"I must go home now," and Luke flew away without saying goodbye. All the way home he thought about Sally.

At home, a worried Jimmy asked, "Where have you been?" Luke told him the story, but didn't say anything about Sally. Jimmy was a little worried about his naughty cat; Luke was acting very strangely. Suddenly, there was a loud 'boom'.

"What was that?" Luke looked out the window, "I think someone has blown up the Mayor's house. Stay home Jimmy. Stay."

As he was flying, Luke could see the Mayor's house burning. Then he saw E. Guy with a gun again. He was getting ready to shoot the Mayor.

"Stop!"

"Or what," laughed E. Guy. "Don't come any closer or I'll shoot."



"Take this post." It was Sally, she was flying next to him!

Luke threw the post at E. Guy. But this time E. Guy was ready. He used his own power to move the post towards the Mayor.

"Ah, help me!" The Mayor was trapped. Then Sally used her power to turn the post towards E. Guy.

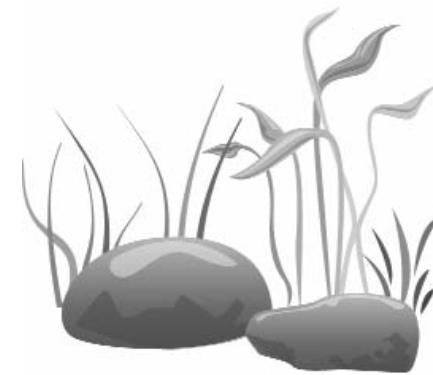
"You think YOU can stop me?" Screamed E. Guy. But Luke joined his power to Sally's, and E. Guy lost control. "Oh no! Don't!" The post crashed into E. Guy and crushed him with double the power.

Sally and Luke were heroes. "Thanks, for your help. You're a good cat," Sally said.

"Yes, he is," agreed the mayor, "and great teamwork!"

"I'm sorry I was rude to you," blushed Luke.

"Is that my naughty cat?" Jimmy asked, confused, watching the TV news. ●





## The heart of the Stone

By Trinh Kieu Mi (age 13)

"Tick, tock, Tick ... Buzz...! Buzz...!!!" - The alarm clock is ringing. It's time to wake up. Turning off the clock drowsily, I slowly wake up. A sun-beam radiates through the window and goes straight into my eyes, dazzling me. What a beautiful day it is! The sun is shining brightly, and the birds are singing happily. Everything seems to be fresher thanks to the sun. It must be so warm out there - outside the window; not like here. There are no noises, no voices and nobody home; except me. I suddenly feel a little bit cold and lonely.

My day always starts with watering the house plants. They are very useful: making the house more beautiful, bringing pure air; and they especially help me feel less lonely. My father loves plants, and pretends to be their father, too. He goes to work on Mondays and comes back on Fridays. He is at work now. I suddenly think about my mother and younger sister. They are in China. I wonder what they are doing, what they are thinking, and how they feel. As for me: I'm lying in bed, thinking about my family, and feeling lonely.

Eleven months ago, my city was enjoying its busy but wonderful days as usual. The weather was fine, neither hot nor cold. I came back from school on my bike, quite tired. I remember: I stopped my bike in front of our door, got down, put my key in the lock, opened the door, and stepped into the living room. Everyone was sitting there quietly. Although I knew something was wrong, I pretended not to notice; tried not to care about the weird look on everyone's face. As I was going to my room, mum called after me: "Steph! Sit down. I want to tell you something. We need to talk." I couldn't ignore her so, surprised, I sat down.

And here's where the story really starts. My mom said that her boss had asked her to go to China to work. She would be gone for at least 2 years. She wanted to know what I thought about it. But it totally surprised me. I didn't know how I felt, or what to say. So I told her: "Mum, I'm really tired now. I want to take a nap. I'll think about it later and tell you as soon as I'm done, OK?"

I went to my room and started thinking. I had never thought there would be a day like this. I knew that going to work in China had many advantages, but these weren't on my mind:

"If I say yes, mom will move to China for 2 years. Then my family will move to China with mom. Or she might go to China alone. But I know mom would never do that because she is afraid of being lonely. I won't even suggest it. But what if I say no? It would mean mom wouldn't have to go anywhere. Nobody would have to move. And everything would be normal again. Yes! That's right!"

That evening, I told mom my answer. She smiled at me, "I won't go anywhere then. I'll always be beside you," she promised. I was so happy at the time. I trusted my mom. But I missed one thing - her eyes. Now I remember, they were full of disappointment.

Three weeks later, one night when I was doing my homework in my room, someone knocked at the door. As the door opened, my mum stepped into the room. "Hi, honey." Her voice is usually warm. "so, what are you doing?"

"Homework." I was suspicious. Something was wrong with her voice.

"Is everything OK at school?"

"Yes, everything's fine."

Then she suddenly asked, "Will you be OK without me?"

"What do you mean mom? Why do I have to be without you? You will always be beside me, always there for me. You've promised me, don't you remember?"

Mom's expression suddenly changed. "Honey! I'm really sorry but... I have to go. I'm leaving next weekend. But just for 2 years. I'm taking your little sister with me, so you don't have to go if you don't want to. Dad will be here with you."

I was speechless. I couldn't think of anything to say. Then: "Mom, can you go out? It's late and I want to sleep. I have to go to school tomorrow."

I cried all night. Mom had promised me. My mom thought that I had said 'No' because I didn't want to go to China; the reason she leaving me at home

and taking my sister. This wasn't what I wanted. I needed to be with mom. I'd said 'No' because I thought she wouldn't leave without me.

I was so disappointed and angry. All that week, I didn't talk to mom. I thought she knew me, but she didn't know anything. I began to hate her. Since that day, I have never opened my heart again. I became colder, quieter. I stopped hanging out with my friends. And my friends gave me a nickname: "Smart Stone" or "Steph the Smart Stone".

My mother and younger sister have been in China for about one year now. But I haven't called her even once. I've just waited until she called me, or dad called her. I really don't want to talk to her. It seems that I'm still angry, even after all this time. Everyone thinks I must miss my mom very much, but I don't miss her at all. My mom and I are not close anymore. In the past, I used to share everything with her. But now I have nothing to say.

When mom went away, I decided to try to get a scholarship to study abroad. So, since mom and my sister went to China, I've spent all my time studying. Sometimes I try to think about the reasons for all this studying. It seems it's not just about wanting to go study abroad and follow my dream, there are deeper reasons: I don't want to live with 'her' - the one who broke her promise to me, who let me down. It might seem ridiculous, but it's true. I've entered a Canadian scholarship competition and I did quite well in the exam, I thought. Now I have to wait and hope.

It is quite late now, and one more day is going to be over soon. I'm brushing my teeth when the phone suddenly rings.

"Steph! It's me!" It's my mom. "Listen Steph! I'm coming back home next Sunday, OK? So please wait for me."

"What?! Who is going to what? What did you just say?"

"Coming back? Home? This Sunday? Why does mom always want to shock me? I really don't know what she wants me to do. She's so unpredictable. She makes decisions without me, and then surprises me like this. All she needs to do is keep silent and do it. I can't change anything now. I'll let everything happen in its own natural way."

She says she is coming home because she feels too lonely in China, and she

misses everyone. My head's empty, just like the moment I knew mom was leaving for China. But the unpleasant feeling isn't exactly the same. That day, one year ago, my heart was broken; today, right now, in this empty, cold, lonely house, my heart is stone. I pretend to be OK with it.

Today is Sunday. Dad wakes me up at 6.30 am. We are going to the airport to pick up my mom and sister. I complain about being too sleepy, but I still have to go. There are many people at the airport and they all look so happy. I look around the airport and I think that one day, I'll be here again; but not to pick somebody up. There they are - mom and sister. I give flowers to them and mom hugs me. I feel uncomfortable. Then dad says: "Tonight we'll go to the restaurant for dinner. We have to celebrate. I'm so proud of you, Steph!" My mom is quite surprised.

"Why?" asks mom, "what's happened?" Dad is surprised now, he thinks I've already told her. He tells mom I've got a scholarship to study in Canada. I'll be leaving next weekend.

Time passes so quickly; it's time for me to leave. I'm sitting on the plane right now. I really don't know how I feel. It's so complicated: a little bit nervous, worried, and ... I don't know. But there is something strange. I feel that I miss her already. It seems that I don't hate her. I don't want to live in the past with a stone-heart anymore. After 16 years of living, I realise something important: Love, especially between family members, can conquer all. Your family are the most important people in your life. Yes, it might be hard at times, but you have to feel lucky that you have them around. The realisation warms my heart, and I almost cry.

The plane is taking off. "Goodbye everyone! Goodbye the past! Goodbye the dark clouds, and hello blue sky. I won't let you down, dad and ... mom!" I'll go to Canada and try my best. A stone can also have a heart, a warm heart. ●





# Heaven is Here

By Nguyen Hai Vy (age 11)

Mr Fatty Whobbles worked really hard and he spent much of his time feeling sick about his life. He was very rich but he'd never had a vacation. One day he decided to go somewhere to take a rest. His girlfriend said he should go to heaven. You should know that Fatty had a very unusual girlfriend. When she slept she could go to heaven and she went so often she had a job there. So one night, when they both slept, she made a staircase of cloud in his dreams and Fatty Whobbles climbed up to Heaven....

For the first two days Fatty found himself walking around the 'oldest' part of Heaven. Here he had to eat soup everyday like everyone else, because no one had any teeth. They also just listened to old music like 'ca tru' and 'cai luong'. The place was so quiet and boring; maybe everybody was too old to leave their homes. But he liked the buildings because, although they were very old, they were beautiful and grand. They were looked after by God's cleaners, who came and took care of them everyday.

On the third day Fatty felt it was time to move on. His girlfriend told him if he wanted to move he should jump up and down. Fatty jumped as high as he could and found himself in a place full of teenagers. He would only stay here a short time too. The first thing he noticed was the noise- it was so noisy! The teenagers were listening to loud crazy music and screamed as they danced. Fatty had to put his hands over his ears. The teenagers all knew famous singers, models and actors and watched all the popular TV channels. Like teenagers on Earth, they talked about dating all the time. Fatty thought they were nice but he couldn't stand it; it was time to move on.

Because Fatty was tired he could only do small jumps now and found himself in a 'baby' part of Heaven. There was nothing to do here. All around him were babies crying. He couldn't do anything to help but he saw people cleaning all the baby's dirty things. The buildings here were brightly coloured and everyone just drank milk. Again, he felt bored and a little sad too, so he decided to try to go to the 'adult' part tomorrow.

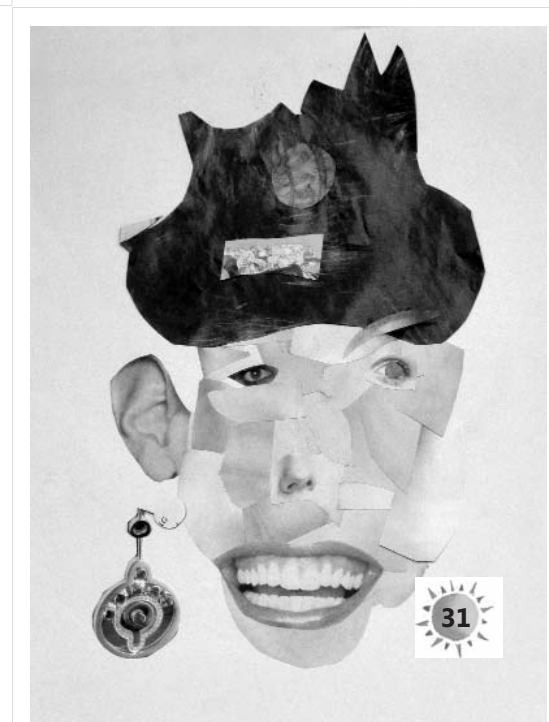
Suddenly he heard a voice, " Time's up," God had appeared.

"Really," said Fatty sadly.

"You have to go home now," commanded God.

Fatty woke up back home in his bed: "What can I do? The adult part would have been so great but I can't visit now". Fatty sat and thought, and thought. Suddenly he said, "I am an adult, I should live a good life, a real life!" He realised that real heaven was your own life, the life you are living.

He smiled, "no heaven is better than your own heaven." •





## THE FINAL MATCH

*By Pham Hong Thanh An (age 14)*

In the dark, Fernando saw a little light, then U15 World Cup appeared. He tried to touch it but it was too far away. There was a 'boom' and the cup disappeared. Standing in front of him were his best friend David, his coach Phillippe, and his parents.

David said, "you are not my friend anymore."

Phillippe said, "You are not my student anymore."

His parents said, "you have made us so disappointed."

Fernando screamed, "It wasn't my fault!"

It was dark again. Fernando called out, "Hello, is there anybody there?" But nobody replied, he was alone. He felt afraid and he began to scream...

He found himself sat-up in bed. He looked around. It was 1am, and David was asleep in the next bed. "It was just a dream," he whispered, and fell back into a lonely sleep.

"Wake up, wake up, come on, Fernando. You don't want to miss the final match. Come on!" David yelled the next morning.

"It's 6am, and the match isn't until this evening. Let me sleep, I'm really tired," Fernando said.

"But the coach wants us in the gym in 15 minutes."

"OK, I'm up, I'm up. You happy?"

"Very happy," David smiled.

Fernando had shower and then got dressed. He and some friends had been chosen for the Spanish U15 World Cup team. They had just beaten Argentina to be in the final with Brazil -the team that had recently beaten

Japan and the Netherlands. When he got to the gym, he saw David, Senna, Johall and Gozallo were talking about how they would beat Brazil.

About 5 minutes later, the coach, Phillippe, arrived: "I have some information about the Brazilian team. They have a big defender called Juan. He is tall and strong. Their full-backs are Jesar and Graso. They aren't fast, and that will be an advantage. But the most important thing is their forward, Jack, he can shoot from any position, he's very dangerous. So, let's go out to the football pitch and practise.

All morning they practised, and then had a healthy lunch of fish and rice. In the afternoon, when they were ready to go up to the bus, coach Phillippe coughed up some blood. The team were frightened and called an ambulance.

After the team had waited at the hospital for an hour, the doctor appeared. He said: "Phillippe is very sick, we've given him some medicine, but he has to stay here for at least 2 days; or if it gets worse, a week. I'm very sorry."

"Thank you very much, can we have a private moment, please," Fernando said.

"What do you think?" Fernando asked the team.

David replied, "We can't play the game without our coach, or maybe we could let Brazil win ..."

"Shut up! I will not let that happen. Let's go and talk to Phillippe," Fernando screamed.

"Good idea," Johall said.

They all went to the room; their coach was sleeping. When he opened his eyes, he asked, "What are you doing here, you have to play Brazil."

"But we can't...," David cried, "not without you."

"No, you can, you are the best team I've ever known. You can do things no other team can do. I trust in you." Phillippe went back to sleep.

"What do we do now?" Senna asked.

"Get ready to pack, we have a game to play," Fernando said.

The team got on the bus and went to Wembley stadium to play the final match with Brazil.

"A big welcome to everybody joining us today at the U15 World Cup final. I'm Frank your commentator for this evening. The match is about to begin. The Spanish are in red, the Brazilians in yellow.

"They're off... Jesar has the ball, quickly loses it to David, who shoots! Oh, that was close... Brazil attack, Jack shoots and GOAL! 1-0 to Brazil. That was so beautiful... Spain have the ball, David passes to Gozallo, who passes to Fernando and oh, the Brazilian Julio catches the ball easily...

"...What's wrong with Spain? They're playing with no soul, and Brazil are playing so well... Another miss from Senna, and Brazil attack again. Jesar, to Graso, back to Jesar who crosses to Jack... GOAL! He's done it again, 2-0. Brazil are well in the lead...

"...Maybe the cup will stay in samba country again... but wait... GOAL! It looks like Spain will not let it happen, Spain are quickly back in the game. David is the scorer, 2-1. And that's the end of the first half.

"Welcome back ladies and gentlemen... Brazil are attacking, Juan shoots! No goal, Johall caught the ball easily. Spain are playing a lot better in the second half. Now Spain are attacking. Gozallo, passes to David. David is making Brazil very tired this half, he's difficult to stop. Oh, Juan stops David, and David is hurt! The doctors are taking care of him. The referee is talking with Juan and David. A yellow card for Juan and David is back...

"...Senna passes to Fernando, to Gozallo, back to David, Fernando shoots, GOAL! It's 2-2. Fernando! He's scored again and Spain are definitely back. What a great game! Now the two teams are really fighting to win the game...

"...Its the 55th minute and time is running out. Brazil are attacking, even the goalkeeper has joined the attack. Oh no, Brazil have lost the ball too early! Fernando has it... but Juan has pulled him down in the Brazilian area, and it's a red card for Juan and a penalty for Spain. Looks like Fernando is going to take the penalty..."

On the pitch, Fernando was worried. Images from his dream the night before appeared in his head. He was finding it difficult to focus.

David came over to him, "It's now or never. You can do this Fernando, remember what Phillipe taught us."

Fernando cleared his mind.

"Fernando makes his run... GOAL !!! Spain have a new hero!.. and there goes the final whistle! The U15 World Cup is in Spain's hands.

David yelled, "We won! We won!"

"yeah, we won," whispered Fernando, relieved.

The next morning, the team went back to the hospital with the cup. Phillipe was up in bed eating breakfast. Fernando gave the cup to his coach.

"I think this belongs to you, coach!"

Phillipe looked closely at Fernando, and then at the rest of the team, and said, "No, you have it, you keep hold of it, you all deserve it."

"Thank you," Fernando said.

And all the team thanked him.

"And thank you, my champions," Phillipe said proudly. ●



## The Game

By Pham Quynh Trang (14years)

A monstrous game were you have to exchange your life for death if you lose...

One day he was wandering in the park, waiting for a chance to find a job. He had been out of work since they kicked him out about a week before. He noticed the newspaper on the path, picked it up, read it voraciously, and stopped at a little article at the bottom: "Need a guardian. High salary. Can discuss more. Contact..."

Three days later...

"Yeah. I finally got the job. It will be easy for me to do, and for them to pay," he cheered, "but I wonder why I've been hired for so much money for such a simple job... Anyway, I am soooooooooo lucky!"

He was on his way to the house when he stopped suddenly, and gasped. Facing him was the biggest, oldest, and the most mysterious mansion in that area. "Ok, THIS is bigger than I thought."

Trying to even his breath, he moved nearer and knocked on the door. The huge doors slowly moved. A maid stepped out, looked at him suspiciously, and asked in an emotionless tone: "Why are you here? There's nothing for you."

"I'm David. David Sloanne. I've been hired to be the guardian of this..." he looked around, "house."

She raised an eyebrow. "Is that you? So...welcome. I work here as a maid. Liz Bernet." They shook hands and she let him into the house and closed the doors behind him.

For a while he couldn't move and was confused. Inside there was hardly any light, "I've just been stood in sunlight, a peaceful scene with fresh air, and now I'm in this damn prison" he mumbled.

When his eyes got used to the darkness, he saw Liz had turned back with a large bunch of keys. "Let me show you the house." He nodded and followed her silently.

After a while, she gave him another bunch of keys, "Your duty is to check and make sure that all the doors are locked at night. Sometimes you'll help me with the cleaning. Your room is over there, opposite mine. The meals are served at 7am, 1pm, 6.30pm."

Suddenly, she turned back again and stared at him. "I must tell you this, David. This maybe strange, but its not a joke. Promise me you won't talk to anyone else, okay?"

David wondered if that was important; maybe about their masters? Realizing that she was still staring at him, he said quickly, "Alright. I promise."

She nodded, and opened the study room, sat on a chair and told him to do the same. "David, do you know why they pay so much?" she asked.

"Nope. I've thought about it, but I can't think of an answer."

"Right. This house," she looked at him, "is a very strange house. At night, you'll hear whispers, screams, footsteps- sometimes right next to you. Now... I'm used to it, but a lot of people have heard them and run away."

He burst out laughing, "I'm not the same as them. They were cowards. They just imagined it."

"I'm talking seriously. Even I can hear them, and I know they're real. In this house, you must be careful," she pointed out.

"Careful? of what?"

She sighed, "You'll know soon enough."

That night, he fell asleep quickly after checking all the doors. He chuckled, remembering what Liz had told him. "There is nothing. She's paranoid."

At midnight he was woken up by the scream of a crying baby. The sound moved nearer and nearer. He buried his head in the pillow, then grumbled, "Geez. Don't they know it's night now and others need to sleep?"



Since that first night he'd become more and more annoyed with the weird sounds. Sometimes screams, sometimes laughs, but he tried to ignore them. He helped Liz with the cleaning almost everyday, so he usually felt tired at night. Liz was becoming friendlier, and they soon became friends.

One day, when he didn't have to work, he wandered around the house -which made Liz dizzy. After checking the doors that night, he went to his room but couldn't sleep. So he sat in an armchair and read a book. Around midnight he heard someone laughing. His anger rose, he opened the door quickly and shouted: "Leave me alone! Go away!" Suddenly, he became quiet. There was no one there. But...he felt a wind, a very soft wind around his body. "Even the light can't shine here, why is there a wind?" he wondered.

He heard the laughter again. Although it made him tremble, he still followed it to the end of the corridor to a door. Liz had told him not to enter this room. "What is there in this room?" he thought while automatically finding the key.

"David."

He jumped.

"What do you think you are doing? Didn't I tell you not to unlock this room, ever?" It was Liz.

"I think there's something behind this door and I want to check it."

"David," she tried to calm him down, "I TOLD you this room is dangerous, not only for you, but also for me and everyone else, didn't I?"

While listening to her, David had unlocked the room, entered and pulled her with him.

"You dared..." Liz started.

"C'mon, Liz. I'm sorry, maybe I'm being too skeptical. There is nothing here. I don't think you need to worry," he smirked.

She rolled her eyes, "Can we go back now? Are you satisfied?"

"Alright alright, Let's go."

They turned back to find the door closing. They ran as fast as they could, but

were stopped by lots of solid figures. They prevented Liz and David from finding the door and running away,

Now they only had one way to go, towards the darker side of the room, towards a strange mirror. It looked gorgeous and luxurious. They went near-er and David stared at the mirror. It was sparkling, calling to them. Standing in front of it, David could see the shape of a hand. He tried to clean it, but as he touched it he knew something was wrong. The mirror began to break, and sounding creepy in the silence of the darkness. They moved back, but were pushed by the figures until they fell into the mirror.

They fell, and fell-

When they were conscious again, they had no idea where they were. There was only a thick darkness and chaotic sounds.

Liz was remembering a strange story her Grandpa had told her. Suddenly, she grabbed David's shirt and made him pay attention. "There is a story about a game played by The Devil. A mirror can become a gate to hell. When people come to the gate, they are usually dying, and they have the opportunity to live again. Its a live-or-die game."

David grimaced. "You think this mirror, I mean, the mirror in the forbidden room is a gate?"

"Yeah, maybe. There is a poem:

'Come to me, play with me

This is "to be or not to be"

You will win, and your life is eternal' ."

In a flash, they were separated. Liz found herself standing alone, she could see nothing around her. She jumped when she heard a voice, "The dark is eternal, young woman. But you did win the first game, so you have two choices: you can transfer back into your world, alone; or you can play a game and help the man. What do you choose?"

She was confused. After a while, she decided to play the game. At the same time, David was in the same position. He decided to join in too.

A blue flame blazed up. They were in a maze, but couldn't see each other. They looked up to see a sand-clock filled with white sand. It was shining and flowing. "We don't have much time," they both thought, and ran into the maze to find each other at the centre.

They often got stuck up blind alleys, because there were many illusions throughout the maze. Soon, they became tired of snatching at them and almost gave up. But they remembered the sand clock, strengthened themselves and continued. They soon learned how to ignore the illusions and found it quite easy to reach the centre. The moment Liz arrived at the centre, and saw David, she felt like her heart had stopped beating. They ran and hugged each other. "We won," Liz cheered.

"I didn't think we would win so easily."

"Oh, not so easily, but you are right." The atmosphere became chilly.

HE was standing there, with an artificial smile. "No one has ever won my game, you are the first. I have a present for you."

David trembled, he didn't trust this thing. It was unreliable. Lucifer sneered, then smiled sweetly, "Go to the light, go back to your world, you will live forever." He bowed his head very low, "Take care," he quickly left the two surprised people.

And they burst into laughter, "We won, and he had to praise us." A faint light guided them to the gate. They happily stepped over it; behind them a following darkness swallowed it up.

When they arrived back, the scene was dazzling. But it soon became dim, the light was being sucked into a darkness. All of a sudden, Liz knew they had just lost the game. It had been a lie; maybe if she had refused they would have gone home. But she also knew she couldn't trust The Devil, he was cunning, and never kept a promise. She didn't say anything, but David understood.

They were falling again; falling into an endless darkness. The light was being covered by a dark until it became a little spot, and then it silently disappeared. ●

## Dangerous

*By Hoang Linh Chi*

"**BANG! BANG!**" there was the noise of a gun shot inside the house of DR. John Barnett. Maria Cusack, John's neighbour, ran to his house, knocked on the door, "Mr Barnett? Mr Barnett? What's happened? Are you there?" But there was no answer. "Will! Will! Open the door, Will!" she yelled. Still no answer. Maria felt something terrible had happened to them. She tried the door, and surprisingly, it wasn't locked. She opened it and went inside. "OH MY GOD!" she bawled. The house was in a mess. She went further inside and found the dead body of William Barnett, John's son. Maria drew back in terror. She looked around for John but he had disappeared.

A little while later at the police station, "Hello Ms Cusack, I'm Detective Kid," a man with side-whiskers said.

"Oh hi. Nice to meet you," said Maria. She looked closely at Detective Kid, "astonishing," she thought, "such a huge and healthy man, with side-whiskers. How can a person like that be called Kid?"

"Can I ask you a question?" asked Detective Kid, "You're not American, right? Because you don't look like..."

"You are right," confused, Maria said, "I'm not American. The Cusacks are my foster parents. I went to live with them after my parents died. They named me Maria. But 6 years ago, my foster parents died too!"

"Oh really? I'm really sorry to hear that. Can you tell me about the relationship between you and William Barnett?" Detective Kid asked seriously.

"Will is my fiancé. We met at a prom 4 years ago and became a couple. We had decided to get married next year." Maria began to cry. "But now it won't come true! Will never come true!"

"Poor girl," thought Detective Kid. He didn't say anything, just looked at Maria.

Later that day two women were gossiping on the street. "She was really good at pretending she didn't do it. You know what? I believe she was the killer!" one woman said.

"Me, too!" said the other.

"Oh excuse me. What's happened? I only arrived here today," asked a man.

"You're new around here? Look at you! You must be rich! OK I will tell you! Be careful with that girl!" the woman pointed at Maria across the street. "Her name is Maria Cusack. Don't believe what she says. She'll tell you lies because she only wants your money! The family in that house died because of her! But I don't know how she did it."

"Thank you for that information! I'll remember that." the man said.

After saying goodbye to the women, the man turned around walked to his car. "Ring! Ring!" his mobile rang. "Hello, Detective Kid."

"It's me, Captain Bellick. Have you found anything out? We're still looking but we can't find any clues in the house! No fingerprints anywhere. Nothing!"

The next morning an alarm began to ring. It was 7.30 am. "It's time for work," smiled Detective Kid. He got up and started to do his morning exercise as usual.

"BANG! BANG!" the noise of gun came from behind his head.

"James, STOP! How many times have I told you? Put that toy gun down, now!" screamed the child's mother. "Say sorry to Detective Kid, RIGHT NOW!" She turned to Detective Kid, "Oh I am really sorry about my son! Are you OK?"

"Yes, I'm fine," said the Detective Kid. Turning to the child, he smiled and said, "If you do that again, I will catch you!"

"You can't catch me! You know why? I have used a special thing so you can't find my fingerprints! My fingerprints only appear when you put tea water on it," said James.

"What? Oh that means....Why didn't I think of that? Thanks boy!" Detective Kid said happily. He immediately ran to his car, and got on his phone, "Hello, Captain Bellick? It's me, Kid. I know how to solve the crime! I'll be there in 15 minutes! Wait for me!"

"Give me a cup of tea and the gun, too," said detective Kid, back at the police station. He put the gun inside the cup of tea. The fingerprints on the gun appeared slowly.

"Oh my god!" said the group of police officers around his desk.

"Now lets get the criminal!" Captain Bellick said.

"No need to do that! I got her already! Right, Ms. Cusack?" Ms Cusack had been sitting nearby. "Your love of money has let you down!" said Detective Kid. " Now please follow us. You will live in prison with your dreams for the rest of your life."

"Thank you! You've done it again!" said Captain Bellick.

"It's OK! It's my job!" Detective Kid said. ●



# Eleven Tales



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