



Disastrous Directions

Contest Entries

Jael, 11, British Columbia

The Dog Park

I grabbed the handle to my front door and pulled forcefully, but it wouldn't open. "It is stuck!" I thought, but really, it was locked. I headed down the driveway talking to myself about how I should have checked if the door was locked first. Suddenly, "Ahhhhhhhhh!" I screamed as I ran into a spider on it's sticky web. Right then a Siberian Husky and a petite Beagle sprinted over and barked at the spider. I watch as the spider scurried away in fear. The two dogs ran up the street and disappeared into a bush. "I hate spiders!" I muttered. I skipped down the driveway turning right, passing two red brick_houses, then looked down on the ground, saw a rock, picked it up, and without looking I threw it mightily, "BANG!" It smashed right into a newly polished, yellow,

Booster Juice truck, leaving a dent. The angry owner ran out and yelled, "Hey you, come back here! You are going to be paying for that young lady!" I ignored him and ran faster than I ever had before. The man continued to follow me and then barking arose. The same two dogs popped out of nowhere and chased the man away. "My door was locked, the spider web, a dented truck, what more could happen now?" I wondered, as I walked past three more houses. At first the third house looked peaceful, until I heard a kid scream "Charge!" I was confused. I just stood there. Four kids started to drench me giddily with their water guns. Once again the Siberian Husky and the petite Beagle appeared, standing on their hind legs they put their front paws on two of the children's legs yapping non-stop. The children screamed and all dispersed, hurrying inside. I cautiously reached the last house on the corner. I noticed a tall pine tree with some bushes around it. I spotted a cute little squirrel, and then another, and another, until there was twenty-nine more of the squirrel's squirrely friends popping out. They were just about to jump on me until, you guessed it, the dogs' strong voices barked as if to say "Leave her alone!" and then they were gone. I finally reached the gates, separating the park from the houses. I thankfully ran to the dog park, opened the gate and was introduced to the same two dogs protecting me, Merby and Lucy. Their owner passed me a pail of fish. I was about to reward Merby and Lucy, when they grabbed the fish out of my hands and tripped me, which caused me to throw the pale of fish into the air, falling down to the ground. I looked up and.. "BOING!" the pail fell on my head. I was left with a pile of fish on my head, staring right into the eyes of the angry man with a dent on his truck. I decided right then and there that I need a dog of my own!

Kara, 12, Arkansas ~ Finalist

People say if you lick your finger and stick it up into the air, you'll be able to sense weather patterns.

So as I was leaving for dance one morning, I tried it out.

Well, I wasn't sensing anything unusual, so I assumed that meant sunny skies for the day. I got ready

for the day, then headed out to JBT Dance Company.

I started going north along I-38, when it started drizzling outside.

I took exit 74 and turned left onto Greyscale Road to roundabout. I stopped driving when my car was being hit by something. I couldn't find my coat or umbrella, so I hopped outside in my t-shirt and shorts to inspect the situation.

Hail pelted my skin while the pouring rain soaked me to the bone. I dove back into my car, shivering like a wet dog. I turned the heat on to full blast, but... nothing blew out except frigid air. I frowned, shut it off, and started driving again.

I headed east along I-49 and flicked on the local news. Through the static, I could barely make out what was being said.

"Flooding on... I-49. Tornado... watch."

"What?!" I exclaimed. Thunder boomed in the distance. My windshield wipers were wiping in overdrive, but I couldn't see. I hit a huge bump in the road, and my car veered to the side. As I tried to keep driving, my car skidded off of the road.

I screamed as my car fell into a ditch. My stupid airbag was broken, but I was okay. I just had to get the car out of the pit.

I had to push my car up the hill. Since my door was stuck, I rolled down the window and crawled out. It took me thirty minutes, but I eventually shoved my car up the slope. I then got back in my car, but the window was stuck so I couldn't roll it up. "Oh, crud," I muttered.

I missed my exit, so I had to backtrack eight miles. Then I took exit 112, going north along Misty Lane. I turned the local news on.

"Tornado Warning... in... Jasper County."

"I'm in Jasper County!" I cried. I drove to the nearest gas station. The door was locked.

I picked that lock with a bobby pin.

I sprinted inside and slammed the door. I decided to stay in that little gas station until the tornado sirens turned off. I checked my watch, which read 11:49. If I hurried, I could make it to dance on time!

Once in my car again, I turned onto Maple Leaf Circuit, and pulled into the JBT Dance Company parking lot. I ran to the door. But there was a sign on the door that read-

“JBT Dance is closed today due to weather.”

That entire journey, only to find out that the studio was closed. So the moral of the story is to make sure your destination is open.

Of course, check the weather forecast, too.

Hannah, 14, Arkansas

I recently went on a trip, following Dauntless Dance magazine’s how-to article on getting to Move Dance Summer Camp. I had paid my entrance fee, packed my bags, and gotten all hyped up for my vacation. Since the camp was located deep in the wooded mountainside, I decided to use Dauntless Dance’s article to get there.

However, I found the results to be disastrous.

Step 1: Take Highway 71 until you turn onto Tangerine Avenue. It was nice, balmy weather starting out, so I rolled down my convertible’s roof to let the breeze ripple through my hair and the sun warm my skin. All was well until that breeze turned into a gale and that sun was masked by angry grey clouds that unleashed their fury in buckets of rain. Unfortunately, my car’s roof wouldn’t roll back up, so I was soaked by the time I turned onto Tangerine Avenue, which happened to be a dirt road that had turned into a thick, slurping mud.

Step 2: Drive on Tangerine Avenue and take a left at the apple orchard. At least the forest over my head helped to slightly shelter me from the rain, but leaves couldn't help when I passed that orchard. The apples, combined with the violent wind, formed an unstoppable force that inflicted upon me pain that was ten times worse than if hail hit me instead. I tried again to roll up my roof, but to no avail. I swear, I still have a bruise, three weeks later.

Step 3: Follow the brick guideposts and turn right at the large green treehouse.

My car took this chance to break down, obviously spent from climbing the steep mountainside. As I sat on the hood, rain chilling me to the bone, I contemplated whether to walk to my remote destination or to just give up. I suddenly heard a rustling behind me. Turning, I saw a huge black bear with foam dripping from its jaws and claws bore, roaring. I was TERRIFIED. I screamed and streaked towards the treehouse as the bear followed in hot pursuit. I scaled the ladder and breathed a sigh of relief as I collapsed onto the floor. The bear growled twenty feet below me, but at least I was safe.

After this, I completely abandoned the other steps, as well as the thought of even making it to the camp. I waited several hours for the bear to depart, then trudged back to my car. Several feet of water engulfed it, with a few apples from the orchard bobbing on the surface of it, looking like a children's bobbing-for-apples game gone anomalous. I languished in the rain until a car, driving down the road, saw me and took me back to town.

Sure, I realize Dauntless Dance wanted to write a good, usable article, and it had great intentions. But, I can assure you, it went terribly wrong, and I learned a valuable lesson: always give your car an overhaul before a trip.

Katie, 13, Tennessee

5 Miles to the Donut Shop

It was a long, uninteresting day at the police station, and I was counting the hours 'till lunch break. I would have fallen asleep in my chair, if I wasn't so darn hungry. Finally, the clock on the wall struck noon, and I whipped my lunchbox out from under my chair. I was done eating in about two minutes, and there wasn't even a crumb left. I was still hungry, though, and lunch break wasn't over yet. I heard that a new donut shop had just opened a few miles away from the station, and I decided to drive over there and grab a donut. I got up and walked towards the doorway.

“Where ya goin', Tim?”

It was my friend, Jake, who had gotten up to retrieve his lunch from the mini fridge.

“Just gonna git a donut. Ya want me to git you one?”

“Sure. I just want a glazed.”

“Okay. See ya.”

I hopped into my car, and set off down the highway.

Since the police station was close to the highway, it would only take me about ten minutes to go to and from the donut shop, leaving me with an extra thirty minutes of lunch break to savor my donut. I could already taste the chocolate-glazed goodness as I drove down the highway. But suddenly, I had to lay on the brakes, because there was a huge traffic jam that stretched for at least a mile long. I hopped out of my car and jogged to the front of the line, and there, sitting in the middle of the highway, was a flock of geese. They weren't doing anything. They were just sitting there. One man got out of his car and tried to scare the geese away. The only thing that he accomplished was a bite on the knuckles.

I thought about what to do. Then I pulled out my revolver and started firing at the geese.

Sure enough, the geese flew off, honking like mad as they left. I put my revolver back in my belt, jogged back to my car, and set off down the highway again.

It took another ten minutes to grab the donuts and drive all the way back to the station. By the time I got back, I didn't care about savoring time. I just wanted my donut. As I walked through the door, Jake spoke.

“Wow, what took you so long?”

“I don't wanna talk about it. Here's your glazed.”

I threw the brown paper package at him and he opened it up.

“Oh, did I say glazed? I meant to say chocooooo, er, I'll take the glazed!”

His decision changed when I pulled out my revolver. And I wasn't joking.

Joshua, 14, New York ~ 3rd Place

Crunchy Crunch Cruise

I jumped out of bed early Friday, late for my plane to the Bahamas. Two months ago, I won the trip after finding a hidden ticket in a box of Crunchy Crunch Cereal. I only ate 3,000 boxes to find it. I hurried to the kitchen and reached for a box of Crunchy Crunch Cereal. Then I remembered that I didn't need any more of the disgusting stuff. So, I threw the box of Crunchy Crunch out the window and made some cinnamon oatmeal. I took a big bite and spit it out in disgust; the cinnamon tasted extremely spicy like Ghost Chili! My friends must have got me back for putting salt in their sugar bowl.

I returned to my pantry but it was empty. So I went outside to get the box of Crunchy Crunch that I threw out. It was disgusting but better than nothing. I called a taxi and gathered my bags. I waited outside for the taxi. “Strange” I thought, “It should have been here by 5:00. Its 5:30 now!” I ran out of patience and rode my bike to the airport instead. Halfway to the airport a taxi cab raced by and showered me with mud. I lost

control and crashed into a bush. When I got up I was completely covered with leaves and mud. I got to the airport, ran inside, handed the surprised stewardess my soggy ticket, and ran down the terminal. I got on the plane and tried to sleep in my muddy clothes but a toddler behind me screamed the whole flight.

When the plane arrived I boarded a cruise ship that would take me to the resort. As the ship sailed through the deepest part of the bay, people said they could see fish in the water. I leaned over the railing to see but a large wave crashed into the ship and I tumbled over the side. I floated easily in the water thanks to all those boxes of Crunchy Crunch Cereal I had eaten. When I called for help they stopped and pulled me out with some ropes. I stayed inside the ship from then on.

I made it to the resort and enjoyed three exciting weeks of surfing, swimming, and eating absolutely no Crunchy Crunch Cereal. When I got home I collapsed on the couch and slept for a few hours. When I woke up, I went to unpack my things but couldn't find my suitcase. Then I realized with horror that I left it in the Bahamas! All I found was that old box of Crunchy Crunch Cereal.

Evan, 11, Illinois

The Bandit Way

“Cori, c’mon it's time to get going,” I hear as open my groggy eyes to the sight of my older brother looming over my face. I tried to slap him, but he’s too fast. When we were on the road, my brother Gaven asked if I was ready to end our “brother” vacation. “I’m ready to see mom and dad, if that’s what you mean,” I answered. “Wha?” Gaven said, *“I didn’t say something offensive, did I?”* I wondered. But then I then realized, that ahead of us was a mob who blocked the road. So we waited alongside the others.

After the road cleared, we went our way and came to a lonely stretch of road name Jail Road., where it seemed to go right into a canyon. At first, we slowly cruised down the winding road when we noticed there were no cars anywhere. Before we could speed up, ten cowboys jumped out from behind rocks. They gestured for us to roll down the window, but Gaven didn't move. While the cowboys were occupied, Gaven locked the doors. When the intruders realized this, they started kicking the car furiously. My temper raged as a fight broke out between us all. Finally, the bandits piled in the car and speedily drove off. "Well, let's start walking," said Gaven, as he began hiking down the road.

The next day, our walking was rewarded when we came to our street where the car was sitting right by the side of the road! When we saw the smoke in the engine we decided to call the mechanic, who was soon on his way. When he got there, we made small talk, and somehow Gaven made a remark on Honda drivers which insulted the mechanic enough to make him drive off. "What will we do now? I know. Resource!" Gaven said, as he stuck his thumb in the air.

Just then a car rolled to a stop in front of us. "Hop in kids," said a rough character. So we did, and not too long from there, Gerald, the driver, pointed a gun towards us and said, "Give me all you got." But before anything else could happen, we heard the relieving sounds of police sirens, who eventually caught up with him and captured the hooligan.

Hearing about our situation, the police offered to let us borrow Gerald's car. So we took them up on the offer and filled up with gas. But while we were browsing the convenience store, the employee there was convinced that WE were convicts! So, to our disappointment, when he took us into the the police station, they hadn't yet heard about our situation from the other officers and they threw us in the slammer. But to our advantage, that police station was next door to our parents, who could bail us out. It was a long day, but in the end, I learned not to get so emotional over short term bad circumstances.

Gabriel, 12, Toronto

Let me just say that the only reason I even went on this crazy adventure was to prove my Uncle Earl right and free him from the asylum. Well, that and I didn't want to end up in Foster Care. My Uncle Earl adopted me when my parents passed away in a car accident. I was 3-years-old. He is a Zoologist who has devoted his whole life to proving the existence of Jackalopes. I grew up hearing countless stories about these mythical creatures and how he tried to uncover their whereabouts. Now, his colleagues are convinced he is in need of serious help. I went to my Uncle's office to look for some clues in how to find the Jackalopes. In searching his desk, I found a brown, worn, leather notebook. One map, in particular, caught my attention. A long red line connected Uncle Earl's house to a place on the other side of the province. The line ended at the Boreal Forest. This was the first step in finding the Jackalopes. Early the next morning I took a bus to the Boreal Forest.

About four hours into the trip, the bus driver narrowly missed a deer that was crossing the road in front of us. He swerved to the right and landed us into a ditch. Fortunately, no one was injured. Since I was so close to my destination I decided to walk.

When I arrived at Boreal Forest, I reviewed my Uncle's notebook. I was to walk 50 meters northeast until I came to a stream, walk along side it until I came across a group of Western Red Cedar trees. Supposedly, under the third Cedar was buried a small cigar box with further instructions. It was easy to find the stream. Things got really interesting when I ended up nearly beside a family of bears. I stood absolutely still for what seemed like hours. Somehow they didn't notice me and I was able to continue once they left the area.

Once I found the Cedars, I wasn't sure exactly where to dig or with what. So, I dug with my hands. After unsuccessfully digging in two areas, I was frustrated and slammed my fists against the trunk. An opening in the trunk formed. "What in the world....?" I peeked in. There was a small cigar box in the centre of it.

I quickly opened the box and saw a single piece of paper with an arrow pointing downwards. "What does this mean?" I thought. I took another look inside the trunk and

this time I saw a latch. I yanked on it and it opened after the fourth time. There was a remarkable staircase leading down to what seemed like another forest. I carefully made my way down the stairs and couldn't believe what I saw. I saw lush green plains, enormous trees, several burrows, and it smelled wonderfully like springtime. And from the corner of my eye, I spotted it.

A Jackalope.

Maya, 11, Utah

The Treacherous Trip

Jesse sat across the car from her brother, Owen. She was involved in an arm wrestle that had been lasting almost half the car ride. She was on a roll. She had her brother three quarters of the way down, and nothing could break her concentration. She felt an itch on her toe, but she didn't bother to itch it. The itch persisted. She urged herself not to think about it. It was a tricky position to sit in. The car was not exactly an ideal place for arm wrestles. The children were both struggling to have their elbows on the middle seat, and still have their seat belts in the correct position. The itch kept itching and it wouldn't stop. This was no normal itch. Jesse risked looking down at her bare toe, (she always ended up shedding her shoes on long car trips) screamed and yanked her hand out of Owen's grasp.

Confused, Owen followed his sister's gaze to the floor of the car. What both Owen and Jesse saw, was that there was a big hole in the car, and Jesse's foot was in the hole, and it was stuck. "Mom, Dad!!!" Owen yelled, "there's a hole, a big one, in the floor of the car!" Jesse and Owen's dad pulled over the brand new volkswagen.

"Gosh" Dad said "I knew this car had bad reviews, but I didn't know it was this bad". "Is it safe to drive in, honey?" Mom asked.

"No, I'm afraid it's not, dear. Dad replied.

“But Dad,” Owen whined, looking like he was about to cry, “we HAVE to go to Aunt Cassidy’s! And we just got to Nevada, and her house is all the way in California!” He started crying.

“Owen!” Owen’s dad said, “don’t cry!” He sounded more annoyed than comforting. “We will take the bus.”

An hour later, the family had boarded the bus, and were off to California. They had dropped their car off at an auto shop, and were planning on picking it up on the way back. “Uhhhhhhhhh eeeeehhhh aaaahhh” Owen held out sounds, enjoying how the bumps on the road made his voice bump.

Thirty minutes away from their destination, the bus crashed. Nobody knew how it happened, but one moment they were happily driving, the next, they were standing in the road by a wrecked bus. The driver had apparently hit the curb rather forcefully and had somehow tipped the bus. “Well,” dad said, “we can walk.”

So they ended up walking all the way to their Aunt’s house. Finally, hot, sweaty, and tired, they arrived. They knocked. They rang. But Aunt Cassidy didn’t answer. Mom called Aunt Cassidy, and she said, “Oh honey, didn’t you know? I’m in Brazil!” Everyone turned to mom. “Well, I never thought she didn’t get the email, I just thought she was too busy to answer it!”

Sitting in a hotel that night, the family said, almost in unison, “Worst vacation ever!”

Eden, 13, Utah ~ 1st Place

The Road Less Traveled

In my town, there is a saying that goes like this: *The road less traveled is the road most likely to get you hurt.* The kids of Bloomsdale, Wyoming like to challenge that

saying by exploring the deer trails that run through the foothills, but after some broken bones and a few run-ins with cougars, they are usually cured of their curiosity; but not me! I was born with a true mountain man spirit that isn't easily broken.

I started the trek to my sick grandmother's house with a basket of baked goodies under my arm for her and a red jacket on to keep out the early autumn chill. I felt like I belonged in a storybook, which was humiliating! Hoping I wouldn't see anyone I knew (which is hard in the small town of Bloomsdale), I started the long walk that led through the dry hills. Floating on the clear breeze came the sound of laughter. A group was heading up the trail towards me! Not wanting to be seen in my fairy tale state, I dove off into the scrub oak. After scrambling away from the road, I found a faint, hidden path that ran parallel to it. After stumbling along for ten minutes, I turned to travel on the main road again. The only problem was that I wasn't anywhere near the main road. I must have followed what I thought was the path, but now I couldn't find a trace of it!

I decided that I would head towards the sinking sun, which was the direction the road should be in. I plodded around sagebrush, trying to ignore my empty stomach and the fact that I was carrying a basket of cookies.

Suddenly, the ground was gone and I was falling! I landed on a heap of decaying leaves. Dazed, I looked up at the patch of dusky sky far above me. My brain worked frantically trying to figure out what had happened. I realized that I must have fallen down one of the many mine shafts that dotted the foothills. I timidly moved my limbs to check for broken bones, but I only felt sore. I decided that this situation would qualify as an emergency, so I fished a squished cookie out of my fallen-on basket and began to nibble on it while thinking of a plan to get out.

Nothing brilliant came to mind, so I began to climb up the earthy walls. It was tricky, but not impossible. Finally I reached the lip of the shaft and breathed in the fresh desert air.

My body was shaky from the tiring climb, but I raced towards the sunset, anxious to get back home. Finally, I broke through the brush and emerged on the road. As I jogged towards Bloomsdale, something dawned on me. The road less traveled may not be the safest, but it will definitely lead to adventure!

Rachel, 11, Utah

A Disastrous Journey

Not hard directions to follow, are they?

Step one: Drive for 0.9 miles along Kentucky Blvd. Turn right onto Interstate 30.

Step two: go straight for 46 miles, then turn left onto Lucky lane

Step three: drive for three miles, then when the road splits turn onto

Step four: Drive straight for 2.3 miles, until you reach Dolphin beach

Step five: Get on the first ferryboat that takes you across to the island.

Step six: You've reached Palm Tree Island! Enjoy your vacation.

Yes, not hard at all. WRONG! It sounds like the easiest, simplest vacation ever! I've traveled the world! This should not be hard! But these are the real instructions!!!

Step one: Drive for 0.9 mile along Kentucky Blvd, then turn right onto Interstate 30. Except Interstate 30 has been blocked of because of a mega car crash. Find a back road that takes you to Lucky Lane.

Step two: You can't find Lucky Lane. You're now lost because you don't use a GPS. Stop at a nice looking gas station for lunch and ask the person for instructions. Now you've finally found Lucky Lane.

Step three: Drive for three miles, then when road splits turn onto Honesty St. Then you stop for gas because you forgot to when you got lunch. The credit card machine is broken, go inside to pay. You pay, then go outside to find your cars been stolen.

Step four: You "borrow" a motorcycle you find because you just want to get your vacation. Drive straight for 2.3 miles, until you've reached Dolphin beach. You've reached it, but now you've got an angry Motorcycle gang chasing you.

Step five: You look around for the Ferry, but it appears Aliens have crash-landed and stolen the ferry and are trying to figure out how to program it to take them back to their planet. You hop in a canoe with an old guy with a beard who says he'll take you across for five dollars.

Step six: You've finally reached the island, but you just want to go home. You promise yourself you're never going on vacation again, and you'll always use a GPS to get anywhere in the town you've lived in for years.

Simple instructions, right!

Coleen, 14, Oklahoma ~ 2nd Place

Mountains to Move

A travel writer in a faraway land, decided to conquer Rainbow Mountain, a many-colored mountain with rain forests and a desert. With directions copied from the internet, she set out early, with energy bars, and 3 bottles of water in her backpack.

1. Go to the end of the main road.
2. Ford the stream. Turn right after you see the cluster of boulders shaped like a trapezoid.
3. Be sure to have food as an offering.
4. Follow path through the desert.
5. Desert will merge into rain forest.
6. Follow path.

Okay, she was at the end of the main road, what was next? Oh yes, ford the stream... But all she saw was a rushing river with some boulders that crossed over the middle, with quite some distance between them... Was she supposed to jump? She saw no alternative, so she gritted her teeth and stepped on the first boulder. She then realized she couldn't even step on the boulder! She fell headfirst into the water. She gritted her teeth, ignored the cold, and started swimming.

Now that she was out of the stream, she consulted her instructions, and started scanning the surrounding area for a cluster of boulders in the shape of a trapezoid. After a nasty run-in with an ant hill, which left her skin stinging, she located a set that just

might be it. Closer examination confirmed her suspicions, so she promptly turned onto the path on the right.

“Be sure to have food as an offering.” She got out a half-eaten energy bar and set it on the ground. As she began to follow the path, a swarm of monkeys surrounded her, scratched her with their claws, opened her backpack and pulled out *all* of her energy bars! She tried to struggle, but before she could blink, they were gone.

“Path will break out into the desert.” The desert was stunning, and she was gazing at the clear blue sky when, before she knew it, a snake was in front of her. At first, she relaxed, for it was only a snake. Then she saw it was staring at her very intently. She made eye contact, and for some reason, felt a sudden urge to pour *all* her water over the snake. Without stopping to ask why, she promptly did so. The snake disappeared.

She shook her head, trying to clear it, saw what she had done, and was now truly depressed. She had lost her food *and* water. She decided to push forward, since she had come this far.

The next step was *“Follow path.”* She saw the path, continued into the forest and followed it. It winded and twisted for about an hour, and just when she thought she would drop of dehydration, she discovered she had gone in a complete circle! She was now in the town square!

She saw an ice cream parlor, and ordered a double-scoop cone, when she discovered she had no money!

Ethan, Washington

Trip or Disaster?

I enjoy traveling to new places. I do everything from A-Z, hiking, biking there hasn't been a city I have not conquered (well almost). Yesterday I decided to look up one

of the most adventurous city trips in the U.S. The results said the place I was looking for was Forks WA. I immediately made preparations to go there. I was ready in record breaking time, packed, loaded and on the road, Spoons, I mean Forks here I come!

I knew this trip was a disaster as soon as we landed. The airport looked a million years old, rusty metal sided hangers were caving in on planes (that looked about as safe as my grandma's 1940 Dodge Dart). The runway was so cracked you would be certain to break your mother's back. The town, isn't even worth describing. Get the picture, not the prettiest sight. I was in need of transportation to get out of the Stone Age. On a weather faded sign was a number for a local taxi service, I dialed it. A sudden rapid speaking voice could be heard, "Hello speedy taxi service how may I help you?" "Uh, yeah hi, I need to be picked up at Knifes, I mean Forks Airport", I replied. "O.K. beright there bye...." he hung up. Wow, that was weird and- skreeeeeeek. I flipped around, two feet from me was what I believed to be a taxi.

The paint, was yellow and peeling badly, taxi could faintly be made out on a door that looked like an elephant had rammed. Topping it all off the exhaust looked like it was on fire. I was supposed to get it to this! "Well, you coming?" said a man that talked slower than a turtle. "Yeah", I uttered. I grabbed the door handle and pulled, it didn't budge. The man yelled through the glass, "climb through the window!" He reached over and cranked down the window. I slowly climbed in, and before I had my other foot in we were off. The driver speeding close to ninety and me with one foot out the window. Finally I got seated, "Where to sonny?" he said. "Nearest hotel" I stuttered. Before I could even say another word he slammed on his breaks, nearly breaking my neck. "Here you are", he said cool as a cucumber, "twenty dollars". I was still busy making sure my neck wasn't broke

"WHAT?" I said, "twenty dollars!" "Yep, pay up", the old man said. I decided not to argue, paying, I more or less climbed out. Before my feet were fully on the ground the jalopy "taxi" careened away so fast it was gone in five seconds. I wonder how often he gets a ticket. Looking around I saw a building surrounded by deserted houses, my hotel?!" I walked in the lobby or what was supposed to one. A man near a hundred was sitting behind a desk. I signed in and paid quickly. The next thing I did was call for a plane to pick me up, tomorrow!

Josh, 11, Michigan

The Disaster of Saltwater Towny

So, here's what happened.

I was just rolling on a train to the town of Saltwater Towny, a place in my hometown that was famous for their, well, Saltwater taffy. When I got to my stop, Lumiose Town, I got out of the train and went to a pay phone only to discover my passport was gone! I went back to the platform and didn't see a train. It had left with my passport! And whoever saw it next had the power to make me a wanted criminal.

Thankfully I had my wallet, because it had my airplane ticket. So I took a Lumiose Taxi to the airport.

When I got there, security let me pass because I had a spare passport. So I went to a pay station and tried to print out my confirmation number, and someone stole my other passport! I was devastated.

Still, I forged on. As I went on my flight, the plane bucked and shook a little bit when we took off. The Flight Attendants had to hold on to the chairs, it was so turbulent. When we got to about 2000 feet, one of the plane's wings blew off as an explosion occurred! I looked out the window and saw a HUGE Mortar being used to blow the wings off! As the plane went down, the last thing I saw was a large khaki body bag.

When I awoke, the body bag was nowhere to be seen, along with all the people. I checked my pockets, and found nothing but a pistol with five bullets left and a map of America. According to it, I was in my home state, in the jungle that they had created just for people shot down like me. I realized I had been kidnapped by the group known as the Saltwater Burn, as shown on the wall whiteboard.

Apparently they were incompetent kidnapers and there was a door to the outside. Right across the street was the Saltwater Towny!

Emily, 12, Colorado

From the Perspective of a Departed Alarm Clock

I held my breath as Noah sleepily reached out his hand to slap the top of my head. I tried to move out of the way, but me being an alarm clock and all... well, it was no use. Ouch! I cried, hoping the pencils didn't hear. They thought I was such a baby.

For the next several minutes, I watched as Noah just lay there, waiting anxiously for him to move. It wasn't until I turned to 8:15 that Noah finally got up, got dressed, and ran downstairs. I sighed with relief. Humans give me the creeps.

Barely five minutes later, I jumped as the door unexpectedly burst open.

Noah slowly walked in, balancing a stack of books, a glass of orange juice, and a bowl of cereal in his arms as he made his way to his bed.

I began sweating nervously as he came closer; I knew how clumsy Noah could be. Don't you dare spill that on me! I pleaded. This was another one of those times when I wished humans could understand me- but it was no use. I would forever be just a lifeless object to them. As Noah reached to set his glass beside me, his cereal managed to slip off his stack of books, knocking over the orange juice, splattering both all over my little mechanical body. I threw a big fit, but Noah didn't care. Boy did he know how to tick me off.

I was glad to have some time to recover after the little "accident" when Noah left for a party that evening. Sadly though, I was disturbed by a small figure's presence when Noah's 4-year-old sister, Lucy, tiptoed in the room. Maybe I was just a baby, 'cause that little girl freaked me out more than a tarantula. I'd seen her rip up Noah's posters, color on his desk, and eat leftover pieces of candy from his floor.

At least she hasn't done anything to me, I quietly muttered. However, I had spoken too soon. Right at that moment she walked directly towards me, a smug smile on her face. I screamed in terror. Don't touch that! I cried as she hit the "Alarm Set" button,

but she kept tampering with me. It wasn't until her mother finally called her to bed that she let me be.

I finally convinced myself that the worst day of my life was over as I watched Noah fall asleep that night. I was wrong. At 12:36am, Noah jumped awake to my alarm blasting on. Lucy immediately came to mind. THAT GIRL!

I guess I don't blame Noah for what happened next; it wasn't his fault. He was tired, frustrated, dazed, and probably irritated, too. In his fumbling to shut the alarm off, he knocked me off the desk... and I died.

Kiera, 11, Pennsylvania

I started off my riding my trusty horse down apple smith driver onto Hickory Avenue, where two figures were dueling.

They were using glowing laser liker swords, and were swinging them so fast I could barely keep track of who was swinging which sword, the colors clashing red against blue to make a purple that would have been quite pleasant if they hadn't been dueling for their lives.

I continued riding down the road, and turned onto a closed highway where an enormous hole was in the middle of the road, bits of the road scattered everywhere! I ignored it and continued riding down the highway, when suddenly a large tendril came down and grasped my trusty horse!

I barely escaped, but my horse wasn't as lucky. I watched in horror as my horse was pulled into the large hole. I then noticed a large sign by the edge of the hole reading "Do not feed the Sarlac."

I continued on foot, and after about half an hour a group of white seemingly plastic armed soldiers started shooting me, terrible aim, and I had to kill them.

Leaving the bodies on the road, I continued walking, my legs aching from what I had expected to be an easy, quick journey.

I swam through a thick creek, and I had to duck down in the water and ships flew above my head shooting at an unseen enemy in the sky. I emerged dripping wet, and started crawling through a large tunnel with a large hairy, tall creature who I couldn't understand but seemed friendly enough.

I climbed a rocky, tall mountain, and collapsed at the top, and looked out before me. I was there. The first Jedi temple. I cried out in relief and the tall hairy creature cried out along with me, seeming to be laughing.

The End???

Kaleah

Sun. That was the first thing Avis saw that morning as she woke up and looked around her posh tent, if you could call a tent "posh". It was white, mostly, with pink items scattered across the floor. She stretched her tired, sore body, recalling the events of last night's horrid sleep. There were rocks everywhere underneath her sleeping bag, and some animal had made off with her spare hairbrush. However, Avis didn't know that last night was nothing compared to what was coming...

After a decent breakfast (Waffles with lots of syrup. Lots.), Avis decided to check out the nearby mountains, which were beautifully snow-capped. After she packed a few things in a bag, including a water bottle and some small snacks, she was ready to hike. The path started out smooth, and was barely anything like a mountain. Later on, though, there were all sorts of things that she had to get through, like thorny bushes, steep slopes, and even a very scary bear encounter. Just when Avis thought it couldn't get any worse... "OWW!" She screeched. She looked down at her ankle to see some serious swelling.

"Great. Just great. Now I have to drag myself back to the campsite," grumbled Avis as she started half-limping, half-hopping back down the mountain... That is, until it started raining. Now she was wet, in pain, and absolutely miserable. It was obvious the

rain wasn't going to stop for a while, so she quickly found a cave that was somewhat dry. There was some oddly warm moss not far back that she was able to snuggle on until the rain stopped. Avis looked through her bag and started eating some honey cakes that she had packed. But the "moss" said otherwise. As the bear from the earlier encounter rose on his hind legs, Avis ran. Who cared that her ankle was positively killing her? Who cared that it was a very painful slip-and-slide most of the way down? "As long as I get down in one piece," she thought, "I don't care what happens otherwise." As she scrambled through the forest, hopefully in some direction of where the tent was, the rain was getting no better. In fact, teeny tiny pieces of hail started falling from the sky, pelting Avis's head and shoulders as she ran. She saw some sort of glow ahead, and prayed it was the lights she strung up in her tent for this kind of scenario. It was. Partly.

The wind was blowing the flaps of door the tent would have had, if Avis had bothered to remember to zip up the tent. But, being the person she was, she forgot.

Luckily, nothing seemed to be missing, even though the inside of the tent was more than a little sopping wet.

When it finally quieted down outside, Avis got just enough sleep to wake in the morning. "Never doing that again." She muttered. "Wait, where's my sleeping bag?!"

Maggie, 11, Pennsylvania

The Trip

Or, at least I got that business call. 'Once in a life time chance' they said. They being whoever gave me the call in the first place.

I had packed up my car with the essentials- snacks, books, and multiple CDs.

I set the GPS to the city I was to meet them in, about 3 hours from my home. As I began driving down the road I noticed multiple signs pointing towards small inns and

diners, once bright and cheerful now were tattered and faded from age. The sight gave me chills; but I continued on my way.

“No turning back now “I said around 2 hours after I had left.

Suddenly, my car jerked to a stop. I stepped out to smell of gasoline that stung my cheek in the dry air. I kicked the side of the car after seeing the leak.

I was about to call a mechanic when I paused. “WAIT!”

I assume one of the residents of the town had saw me and came rushing towards me from an old wooden house a few yards back. A perplexed grin of both relief and confusion was on my countenance.

As the local approached, I saw it was an old woman with dry, gray hair and a tattered dress.

“NEED any help?!” she screamed directly in my face. “I’m alright, thank you.” I said. I didn’t trust this woman. It was something about her maniacal grin that set me on edge, still glancing at the gas leak. “It’s alright, come, come dear my husbands a mechanic he will fix your car right up!” I gave a creeped out glance before politely refusing.

Thankfully, at that very moment a cab drove past and pulled over. “Thank goodness! “ I said rushing to the window. “I’m in a BIG hurry, is it alright if I have a ride?” I pulled out my wallet and things from my car before paying him the correct amount and stepping into the cab.

While in the cab, I called a mechanic like I had intended before. After about 30 minutes of driving, I saw a glimpse of the city. I checked my watch and sighed of relief. Without warning, the cab driver swerved the steering wheel to the side.

The same old woman was sitting there, inside her car glaring at us. She drove past after throwing something the car. It was a cooking knife.

The cab ended up getting a flat tire and I had to call one of my friends who lived too far away for me to have called beforehand, came to pick me up. Later we found out the mechanic had never came and someone had gotten into my car and stolen it.

I ended up missing the meeting and swore never to go alone again.

THE END

Onycha, 11, Wisconsin

I'm so excited. Today is the day we get to visit Portal World. We get an early start and leave at nine o'clock. Suddenly the car sputters and dies just as we turn onto Main St.

"Oh great," Dad grumbles, "This is just what we need. The battery died."

"Come on. Did the battery really die?" I ask.

"Quit complaining." Mom says.

My dad and I get out and wave, hoping that someone will give us a jumpstart. Fifteen minutes later, we're back on the road.

As we continue down Main St. we see a long line of cars and find out that the bridge got stuck open while opening for a boat. We are delayed another forty-five minutes waiting for the maintenance crew to get the bridge down.

Next, Dad turns down N 5th St. instead of S 5th St. "Sorry gang," Dad says as we turn around after hitting a dead end, "I guess we were supposed to go down S 5th St. My patience is starting to wear thin.

After we get on the right street we realize that Grant St. is being repaved. Grant St. is the only way to get onto Washington St.

"Alright, I guess we'll just have to walk," Mom says.

We walk off Grant St. and onto Washington St. From there we can see Portal World. We're finally there! It is the best amusement park ever. The crazy drive was worth it. I'm just glad I didn't let my temper get the best of me.

Jathan, 13, Colorado

As I pulled out of the garage on Sunday morning, I was greeted by a city construction worker.

He informed me that I could not get out because they were re-doing the sidewalk. I told myself that it didn't matter and that I could still get to church on time if I backed out through the front yard and under the pine tree. Once I was on the road, I drove towards College Avenue. Apparently, there had been an earthquake which had gone straight through the middle of College Avenue. I figured that I had spent too much time four-wheeling through my yard, and that I would not have enough time to go around the massive crevice. So, I backtracked with hopes of gaining enough momentum to jump the crack. As I got out of reverse and slammed the gas pedal, the car didn't bolt forwards like I expected. I hopped out to investigate, and to my dismay, something in my front yard had popped my two right wheels! Still in a rush to get to church, I decided to call the towing company and start trekking by foot.

I sprinted straight at the crack as fast as I could, and cleared it with comfort. I caught my breath then headed towards the railroad tracks, just to discover that the earthquake had caused a train wreck.

I tried to climb over one of the train cars, but singed the bottom of my dress pants in the process. As I tried to get to the next intersection quickly, I broke into a slight jog. As my head was bobbing up and down from running, I realized my sock had torn. It must have gotten caught on something at the train wreck and ripped. I was going to cry. I could possibly make it to church by second service, but I would not have the proper attire.

Just as I wiped the tears from my eyes, a familiar blue and red light appeared. "Is he here to give me a lift?" I wondered. I stopped where I was and started smiling at him, only for the policeman to step out and ask me to put my hands in the air. "For what?" I asked.

"J-walking," he grunted. I hesitantly boarded his car and he took me to the local jail. I could not believe what was happening. Once inside my cell, I cried myself to sleep. I woke up in a few hours to the sound of a fire alarm. An officer came in and escorted me and a few others to his police car. I got inside the car and looked up, the building was, in fact, on fire. I asked where we were going, but the only answer I got was that we were going to a new jail.

After about an hour drive, we appeared at an airport. The escorting officer forced us to board an airplane, then told us to behave ourselves. I was so tired and sad, I fell asleep. He woke me up and told me that we had arrived. I looked around and all I could see were trees, monkeys, colorful birds, and dew dripping off of the leaves. As I stepped off the plane, a drop tapped me on the head. I was really confused, maybe we were in Florida or something. I meant no harm originally, I should not be here! With moisture dripping from the tip of my nose, I followed after the officer. We walked down some little cobblestone steps and a sign appeared in front of a prison: Welcome to the Amazon Rainforest! I could not believe my eyes; what started as an irregular Sunday morning ended up with me being relocated to a prison in South America. I should have been patient and attended second service after the construction workers were finished.

Isabella, 12, Tennessee

An Idiotic Quest

“Look! Look, Thomas! I found a map!”

Thomas snatches the map from my hand and looks it over with a curious expression. “Wow Sis, where’d you find this thing anyways?”

“Tucked in the glove box of that old, rusty, broken down truck back in the woods behind our house.”

His eyes pop with jealousy when he hears this. “You went looking in that truck? Dad would be furious if he ever found out!”

“Yeah, but he won’t because we both know you do more than twice as much ‘exploring’ as I might. You are the one who got me into it.”

He scowls and then looks back at the map. A sly smile creeps on to his face, one that I have grown all too accustomed to seeing. “I think it’s time for a bit of adventure, Sis.”

“And you thought Dad would be mad at me for going into a rusty truck,” I say as I climb onto the sailboat after my brother. “You’re just going to steal his boat in the middle of the night and that’s okay?” According to the map, the treasure it leads to is stuck on an island in the middle of the ocean.

He pretends to be considering this for a few seconds. “Yep! Until we come home and get grounded for the rest of our lives.”

We have only just set sail when lo and behold, a strong gust hits our boat and sends me skittering across the deck. Thomas shouts something at me but suddenly I can’t hear because our boat has been caught in a strong storm. Hard winds push at us from all angles and within seconds I am completely drenched in rainwater.

And lo and behold, through it all I hear my brother begin to sing, “It’s raining, it’s pouring, the old man is snoring...” Go figure.

When the rain finally stops I am so miserable I might just pass out.

“Which way next?” I ask Thomas as I ring out my wet hair.

“Um... I don’t know... the winds blew away our map.”

“What?!” I scream. “You let go of the map?!”

“This way!” He says pointing in a random direction, “I think... but don’t worry... we’ll get there. Who needs a map, anyways?”

We do, because ten minutes later Thomas decides to take a short cut around an island by going through a cave tunnel. Inside the cave we are immediately met by pitch-black darkness. I ask Thomas for a flashlight and lo and behold, he didn’t bring one. We are in that cave so long I begin to doubt we will ever make it out. Finally we do however, so that we are sure to greet the sea monsters on the other side.

Did you hear me right? Yes, yes you did. This is the last time I ever follow my idiot older brother on any of his idiotic quests. And frankly, I won’t be searching any rusty old trucks again anytime soon, either.

Oliver, 11, Ontario

Before I tell you how to go to the Castle of Kings, let me say don't do it. But, if you're crazy enough to go there, you'll need to know how to go about doing it.

Start on the 401 highway. I don't know where you live, but once you are on the 401, you're all set.

Well, my buddy Sam and I were driving north to see it. We had been driving for eight hours, when suddenly, we saw a sign. It read:

ONE-EIGHTH OF A KILOMETER TILL THE TURN OFF
FOR THE CASTLE OF KINGS.
BEWARE! DO NOT TAKE THE TURN OFF!
SERIOUS INJURY WILL OCCUR!

I slammed those brakes, with about one second to get off that highway before we missed our exit. Dodging speeding cars by mere centimeters, we made the turn off.

"Gee, do you really think we should be doing this?" Sam asked me nervously as we drove through a dark forest.

"We'll be alright." I replied. Soon we saw another sign.

I WARNED YOU NOT TO ENTER!
DO NOT GO ANY FARTHER!
TURN AROUND NOW!

The road deadened into a small mountain. It was bare—no trees or moss even. And there, perched near the top, was an enormous door.

"Well, up we go," I stammered.

Eventually, we made it to the door. It had a flashing red light at the top, yellow and black caution tape on the bottom, and a sign saying [again] not to go any farther. I yanked on the handle and to my surprise, it swung open.

We entered a hallway that glowed from light ahead. The more we walked, the brighter the source got. It got warmer, too.

Finally, we found out where the light was coming from. The hallway opened into a cavern the size of a football stadium. We stood on a platform overlooking a glowing pit filled with lava. There was something moving down there. No, not one thing, dozens of little red things were swimming around in there and occasionally jumping out. As I stared at them, I realized they were dragons.

Around the rim of the pit there was a narrow strip of rock, which you could crawl across to get to the other side.

We inched around the pit. It was tough. Unfortunately, one of the dragons decided he didn't like us, and tried to fry us with a column of fire. Fortunately, he missed us. Unfortunately, he scorched my bag. It was burning like crazy, so I let it drop to the lava. The dragon seemed to like that, so he dove after it.

After that, things generally improved. However, we later emerged in Poland and by the time we got to the mountain where we left our car, it was gone.

NOTE - DO NOT BRING A CAR THAT YOU LIKE—YOU WILL LOSE IT FOREVER.

Renée, 13, Ontario ~ Finalist

Wildflower Rain

April 2015 hadn't been particularly sunny, as I'd hoped it would be. I was headed to the Wildflower Field over in Dorchester. The field was supposedly inhabited with wildflower fairies, but I wasn't sure they'd be out, considering the storm.

The bridge to cross the swollen river was closed for repairs. It had flooded and a wooden beam was rotting. I muttered a curse word, turned around, and found the walking

bridge, which was entirely cement and steel. I parked, ignoring the Do not park or vehicle will be towed sign. I don't believe towing exists—the signs are there to scare you.

I crossed the bridge and then the railroad tracks. The rain slithered down my back and crawled into my shoes. It tickled my eyes in a painful way. I was soaked from inside out and only halfway down a flooded Minnie Street.

Moments later, I was lying on my stomach in the muddy sea of street. I'd tripped over a rut in the old road. Wincing as I limped onward with a bruised knee, a torrent of angry storm sent bits of hail down my neck.

I arrived at “Wildflower Field” hurt, stung, and soaking. The grass and wildflowers were a mushy swamp of gunk. I waded into the mess, hoping to catch a glimpse of what made Dorchester famous. But after tripping over hidden logs and scraping my elbow, I was positive no wildflower fairies were going to make themselves seen. A dilapidated barn hunched in the middle of the field—a disastrous place, but somewhere to get out of the rain.

I crawled in through a crumbling door and joined the party of animals that had had the same idea as me. Unnerved by their beady yellow eyes but exhausted, I let myself drift asleep.

Waking up, I found mice in my boots and a spider in my ear—you can be sure I had the capability to holler like the world was ending—but the rain had stopped, so I started back to my car. I didn't feel like searching for fairies any more—the magic of it was gone. Perhaps the storm had taken it along.

The streets were still half-flooded. Yellow boots and pink umbrellas dotted the street. The sky was half blue, half grey.

I limped across the walking bridge. My knee still hurt. My eyes focused on the place where my car should've been.

It was gone.

It'd been towed.

Shoot.

Alexander, 12

Leeches

Last summer, Tuesday morning I was sitting in my room playing Halo 5 on my Xbox one, Minecraft on my computer, and Destiny on my Xbox 360. I had all I needed for a perfect summer, even a math worksheet. But right when I was about to beat my Halo game, my grandfather ran in shouting, "Pack, pack, pack we are going on a road trip!"

My grandfather dashed into my room, unplugged everything and pulled me out of the house and into the convertible, apparently the same thing happened to my brother and sister. My grandfather hopped in and started driving. I said, "But I haven't packed," my grandfather almost yelled, "All you needed to pack was yourself!" I was scared to death. After that, things quieted down until the sky got dark and it started to pour. Just then I noticed that we were in our convertible (which by the way had no roof). The way I noticed was when a drop of rain fell on my head.

We kept driving till I said, "Maybe we should go some wear dry?" Unfortunately I forgot to whom I was talking to, so my grandfather drove straight off the road and into the lake. When we surfaced he said, "Isn't this fun?" "I couldn't hold my temper anymore, so I yelled, "How do you call this anything close to fun. Driving at 100 mph, crashing into a lake after a thunder storm. I was happy until this road trip came along." My grandfather said nothing he just swam to shore with the rest of us and we all went to sleep.

The next day my grandfather woke us all up and said, "let's go swimming!" I was about to refuse but he had already flung himself in the water. My sister was about to do the same when my grandfather leaped out yelling, "leeches!"

After that I didn't waste any time and ran out onto the Interstate, stopped a car and asked to borrow their phone. In no time at all, we were in the hospital waiting impatiently to see our grandfather. When we saw him, the first thing we noticed was a huge, shiny leech hanging on his nose. Grandfather said, "Let's just go on record and never take a road trip again."

The moral of this story is that you should always keep your room locked up, and that you always should have a bottle of anti grandfather spray in your pocket.

Leah, 13, Ontario

Little Bo Peep, Her Sheep, and the Disastrous Directions

My alarm rang shrill. I sat up with a jolt and groaned. I slammed my hand down on the annoying alarm and slouched out of bed.

I slumped into the next room. Its whitewashed walls were stained and cluttered with framed pictures, each featuring a smiling sheep face. This was my sheep's bedroom. I was expecting to see my flock cheerfully waiting to greet me, but only Shawn, my black sheep, was left. He was lazily chewing a crumpled piece of paper. I ran to him and tore the paper from his mouth.

In writing I could hardly make out (because of sheep slobber) I read:

To: Little Bo Peep

If you ever want to see your sheep again,
follow the map (attached) and pay the ransom.

I'm not the Little Bo Peep you're thinking of. I'm a reporter with the side hobby of keeping sheep. I do not wear a bonnet or a pink, puffy dress, and definitely not frilly bloomers.

I loved my sheep very much, and would do anything to get them back, so I decided to follow the instructions.

I quickly got dressed, curled my blond hair, found a pad of paper and a pencil, popped on my sunglasses, and hopped in my convertible. Soon I was on the road heading to my first stop: the gingerbread house.

The gingerbread house was a quaint little restaurant just east of the dark forest. It was a place where the riffraff of other villages (such as ogres and witches) got together for a pint of apple cider and some gingerbread.

As I passed, a lazy looking ogre, who was leaning against the pub, started throwing eggs at my nice new paint job. Some egg hit me, and I swerved, almost hitting a nearby tree.

My stomach hurt, and I realized I had missed breakfast. I wished I could've stopped at the gingerbread house for some muffins; but I didn't want to run into that ogre again, so I drove on.

Next I passed the dwarves' shop. They own a pawn shop, and are known to be dirty thieves. Sure enough, seven little men toddled out of the shop, waving guns and firing!

I sped away hoping that my car was okay and that I could still catch the sheep-napper. The map instructed me to turn left at a giant beanstalk on the outskirts of town. How was I supposed to know that Jack was cutting the beanstalk down? It fell with a huge BANG! on my beautiful egg-splattered convertible.

I continued on foot and the map led me to grandmother's house. When I arrived I saw smoke curling out of the chimney and smelled shortbread. I knocked, and then with hesitation, entered. To my delight I saw my sheep flocked together in a corner. Then with horror I saw grandmother and Little Red tied together. At the stove stood a shaggy-tailed figure. This must be my unlucky day.

Avery, 10, Minnesota

I started driving on highway 78. My instructions said to go 6 miles, but I had only gotten 5 before I got a flat tire. So I called a tow truck and waited. And waited. And waited. Finally they showed up and fixed the tire. So I got on to exit 33 but I had trouble driving because the road was unpaved and the rain made the ground soupy. Finally my

car just stopped. I walked the remaining 2 miles to the McDonald's. I was hungry, but I was refused service because I was so muddy. So I went outside and took a long shower in the heavy rain. Then I went back to the McDonald's and used the hand driers to dry off. I walked to the rental car service. They said that all the cars were rented, but I could try the Lyft app. The Lyft driver picked me up and drove me to the amusement park. But when we got there, it had just closed because of the rain. When I got the Lyft driver to drive me home again, it was still raining and it continued to rain for the next week. Next time I should look at the weather reports before I plan my day.

Grace, 13, Virginia

Stuck

I was given orders to go undercover as a travel writer to shut down a drug dealer gang, Moku.

They're having been complaints about missing persons and shootings at the Mambala Beach Resort. Dark clouds appeared overhead and it started raining. Great.

As I was on the road, I stopped in for a piece of pie. I looked around and I saw two suspicious looking guys. I walked over and rested my elbow on their table, nonchalantly. "Having a nice time enjoying the area?" They looked at each other. "No comment? Well," I said as I held up a picture of the Moku gang leader. "I'm a travel writer, and I'm wondering if you have seen this man?" One shook his head, but looked a little nervous.

Very suspicious. I went out to follow them, but they were nowhere in sight. I started up my car, but I noticed I had a flat tire. I smashed my fist into my steering wheel. I got out of my car and started pushing it to a gas station. There was an air pump, but it was broken. I just decided to leave my car here and walk to my motel.

I did some research on the Moku gang on my laptop, and I didn't really find much. I decided to get some fresh air; I hit the lobby button, but something happened in

between floors three and four and the elevator stopped moving and the power went out. “ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!” I screamed as I kicked the elevator door. I tried the emergency button. Nothing.

I sat in there for maybe an hour, but nothing happened. The elevator finally started working again, but before it could go down to the lobby, it stopped at floor 2. The doors opened, and the same two guys from the restaurant were waiting for me. They grabbed me and put guns to my chest. They drug me out the fire escape. They must’ve figured out I wasn’t really a travel writer, but an NSA Agent. “I need backup,” I said into the com. They threw me into the back of a van.

They drove to an abandoned warehouse, and drug me out of the van and put me into an empty room, and tied me to a chair. But they didn’t know that I always kept a paper clip handy. I slowly took the paperclip out of my back pocket. The handcuffs broke free, and I started to untie myself. The leader of the Moku gang, Hermio Castro, emerged and put a gun to my head, ready to shoot. “This was too easy”, he said. I pulled the rope off me. They also didn’t know I was a black belt in Tai Kwon Do. I knocked them all out and climbed out the window, to see a

They were outnumbered and shut down. And I got a promotion.

Case closed.

Christi, 13, Virginia

The Abandoned Island

I was going to Hobart, Australia to go to this Abandoned Island that I heard about. I packed up all my things, and headed to the airport. When I got there, there was a two hour delay. There was a hail storm coming over Boston.

The storm passed over and I set off for Australia. I had checked my bag but they had put it on to the wrong plane! I had nothing but what I had in my purse. Thank God I had my camera with me!

I went to my motel, but when I got out of the car, a dog came and scratched me and my rental car! My scratch wasn't too bad.

I went to a store and bought a few new outfits and a toothbrush. I went back to my motel so that I could rest up and have a lot of energy for the next day.

I got up the next morning to go to the abandoned island. I got in the boat with the driver and another explorer. We got out of the boat, and we took pictures. It was really beautiful there! There were tall trees and soft sand. The pictures that I took looked really good! We were about to explore some more when a bunch of natives started to come out of the leaves and trees. I had enough time to put my belongings back in the boat before they could grab me! We were taken back to their camp. We were put into a small hut, and they tied some ropes to our hands. They spoke a different language, so I couldn't understand a thing they were saying. I didn't know what they wanted with us! I think we were trespassing on their land and I don't think they liked that.

That night we were awake, but the natives were asleep. The guard that was with us wasn't asleep though! We couldn't escape. We were trying to untie the ropes, but they were way too tight. The guard started to talk to us. I guess he was the one of the few people that spoke English. We learned that his name was Kaweoa, and he said that we were trespassing on forbidden land. After we talked, he thought that it wasn't right that they kept us here. He cut our ropes and led the way back to our boat. He left us, and we were now on our own. I had a spare key to the boat and we took off. It was about 2:47 AM. I didn't want to go back to the Abandoned Island so, I packed what I had and headed home for Boston.

Mandi, 11, Virginia

Magic and Pirates

I am a fairy assigned to go and survey the sea for islands that are undiscovered as a travel writer. At dusk, I was zooming down the rippling black waters of the sea. I saw a lump in the distance- LAND! I was going so fast, I got caught in the tree branches. I felt a sharp pain in my wing. I may have broken it. It would take awhile to heal. But I still had an island to survey. I took out my notebook, and walked around. I saw animals that were hairy, and they ate long yellow fruits that grew in bunches. Very curious, but I can get some sleep for now.

I woke, scrambled up, realizing I was soaking wet on a branch in the ocean. Since I slept on the beach, the tide must have come in and threw me way back here! I saw a ship coming. I snagged onto a rope on the edge. I looked up at the flag and gasped, "PIRATES!" My choices were to either starve, or get captured by pirates. I heard a voice, "I FOUND A VERMIN HANGIN' ON THE SIDE OF OUR BOAT!" one exclaimed. "I THINK ITS A FAY-REE," another yelled. "ITS CALLED A FAIRY YOU DOLT," one said. "LET'S GET HER!"

This was not a good situation for me.

They grabbed me and tied me up, and locked me in a room. There was a small window. A parrot came to the window and perched. He started talking. "AWK! what should AWK! we AWK! do with AWK! the fairy AWK! vermin AWK!" he said. I guess he was listening to the pirates conversation and he repeated it.

"AWK! we should AWK! use the AWK! midas AWK! coins. AWK!" Midas coins! Touch one and you will turn to gold! I had to get out! I soon realized that the wooden pole I was tied to was jagged, so I moved up and down, working the rope down. Snap! I broke the rope! I had to move. I picked up my writing log from the corner. Next stop, HOME!

As soon as I was done rejoicing, my heart sank. I still was on a pirate ship in the middle of the sea about to be executed! I realized my plan would either have to be dive

into the ocean, or die. Suddenly, I realized there were lifeboats! Not really what you would expect on a pirate ship, but there nonetheless!

I quietly crept across the ship deck, afraid of someone seeing me. The boat was on the ship, so I had to heave it off the edge. THUMP! SPLASH! Water sprayed up on my face. I had to be quick before the pirates realized my escape! As I paddled away, I saw a long trip ahead, but I have decided that you shouldn't vacation in this sea.

-The End

Annie, 13, Iraq

The Great and Wonderful Science Museum

"So, Mom, where are we going again?"

"I've told you this a million times. We are going to this cool science museum place."

"Right." I decided to let it go. We really had been over it a million times. We were driving towards Dallas, but the "museum" was somewhere in between Dallas and Waco. I put quotes around museum because I was there when my mom saw the ad. I saw these crazy pictures of dinosaur skeletons and fossils of the missing link. To be honest, I had my doubts about how authentic that ad really was.

Suddenly my mom began screaming, "I SEE THE HUT!!!! I SEE THE HUT!!!!!!!!!" If you've ever heard someone scream in a car you know why I put her words in all caps.

Our tires screeched as we turned towards the hut. "Why did you do that!?" My dad yelled almost as loud as my mom just had.

"Well, do you want to drive another hour to get back on track?"

My dad harrumphed and glanced out the window at the hut. "It looks empty, let's get going." We rattled past it on the nonexistent road. I was a little worried the car would fall apart. It didn't, but the next worst thing happened. We were shot at, by the old man who lived in the hut. We stopped right away. But not soon enough. Our tire was blown out as we were stopping.

The old man hobbled up to Dad's window before any of us had a chance to get out. He rapped on the window with his bony knuckle. The window rolled down, "What in the name of Larry Jackson, are you doin', whippersnapper?"

My dad sighed, "We didn't think anyone lived here."

"Obviously, you weren't thinking at all, now shoo!"

"Well, we can't. You blew up our tire!" It sounded like he had blown up my dad as well.

"So? You've got strong arms, push it away, then fix your precious tire."

We got out of the car, my dad looked about ready to throttle the man, but he was still holding the gun. We began to push, and my mom stayed in the car to steer.

After we finally fixed the car, we drove on, now looking for a yellow sign. We looked for a long, long time. Over two hours by my calculation. We came in sight of it many times before we realized. The man's hut was the yellow sign.

"Now," my mom's voice had lost its optimistic ring. "we go northeast of the sign for 45 minutes." We drove for about that long until we came in sight of our destination.

Another very small building, locked up tight. There was yellow tape around it saying, "Danger Zone: Unstable Building". Figures.