

# All About Books and Writing



INCLUDES:

- poetry
- stories
- letters
- and more!

**Instead of wasting energy with keeping your lamp on while you read at night, try this planet-friendly alternative! Plus, it has a clip to clamp your pages for easier reading.**



**Pst! And your older sister won't complain about "needing her beauty sleep" anymore.**

Order now before our three-day sale ends on [www.amazon.com!](http://www.amazon.com!)

**To: All About Books and Writing**

**From: Wayne Arthur Jr.**

**Date: 1-13-2021**

**Dear All About Books and Writing,**

**Your magazine is one of the only magazines about books and authors out there. And it's great! But one question. Can you make an article on my short story, "How the Goboys Took Over the World in 25 Minutes"? I think it would really benefit your magazine to prepare the people of what's to come.**

**I hope you live through the Goobdemic,  
Wayne**

To: Wayne Arthur Jr.

From: Bella, the editor of All About Books and Writing

Dear Mr Wayne,

Thank you for your feedback. I am glad to see that my magazine interests you. I am sorry, but I cannot accept your short story, for it does not fit the theme of my magazine.

Sincerely,

Bella,

the editor of All About  
Books and Writing

# Table of Contents

Poetry Corner.....	5
This Month's Challenge.....	6
Comic Time!.....	8
How to Make Book Quesadillas.....	9
Dear Martha.....	10
Clarabella's Letters, <i>a short story</i> .....	11
Quiz! What Kind of Reader Are You?.....	15
SHE: The Girl Without a Name, <i>a short story</i> .....	18



# POETRY CORNER

This month's poetry are all short poems. "Short and sweet".

## Odd Story Choice

There once was a girl called Stella.  
And she read a weird book to her fella.  
It was odd and long,  
And about King Kong,  
I guess the fella really loved'a!



**Limerick:** A short, humorous poem that follows a aabba rhyme scheme

## Highlights

The sun's rays shine on  
My new book as I read these  
Last few paragraphs

**Haiku:** A short, three-line poem. The syllable out is like this: 5-7-5. About nature.

## Decision

I wonder as the  
Character makes a tough choice  
On whether to go.

**Senryu:** Follows the same rules as haiku, but is generally about people.

## Bookstore Bella

My Mom said I could  
Go to the bookstore this birthday.  
Big mistake, lady...

## My Mom Always Says This (Differently Though)

It is all fun and  
Games until the monkeys start  
Ripping up their books.



**Cinquain:** a poem built like this: 1 word/ 2/ 3/ 4/ 5. Very dramatic.

## Book

Words  
Pulled together  
To create a  
Masterpiece that everyone loves.  
Famous.

*All poetry this month comes from Bella J. from Illinois.*

# This Month's Challenge

*Write a short story based on this photo.*



To help you get started, use this list of questions:

Where is it?

What is it?

What kind of story is it?

Who are the main characters?

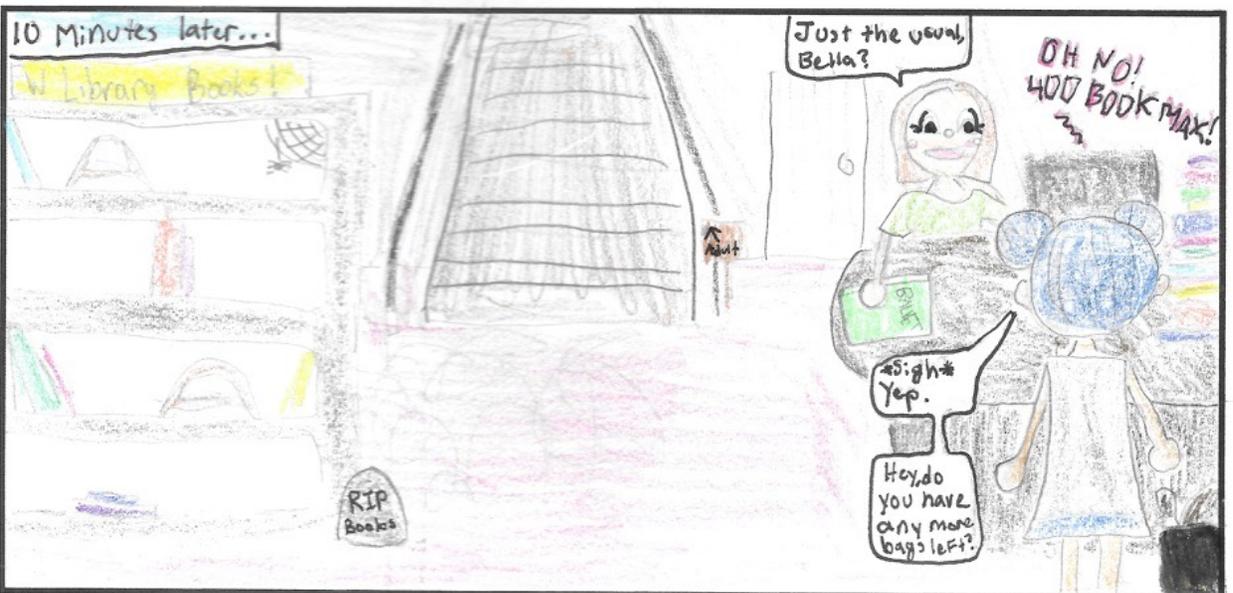
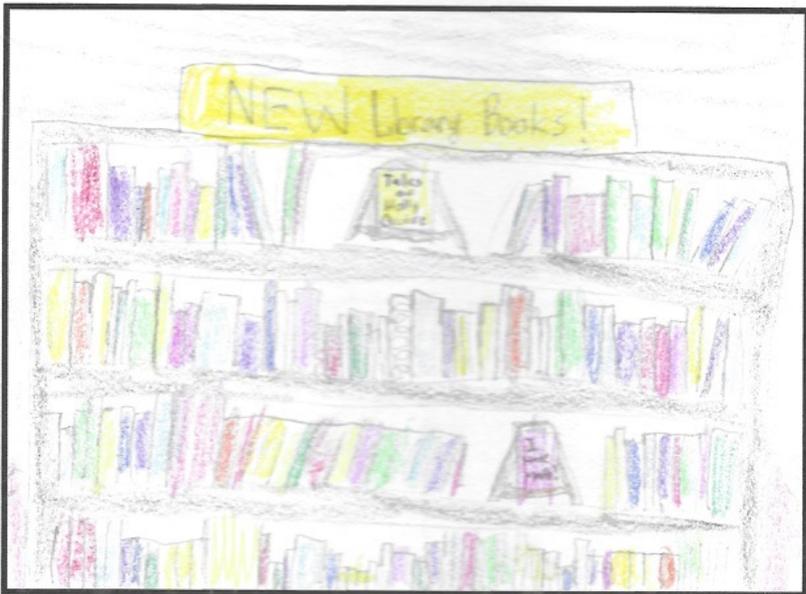
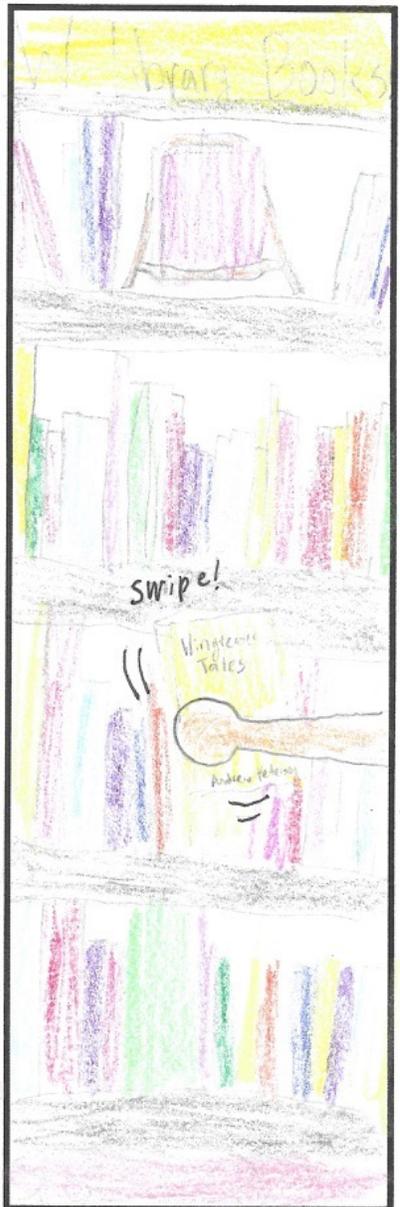
Is it fiction or non-fiction?

Do you dread writing class? Well you won't after this.



Try Cover Story: A Writing Program  
Like No Other

"Just the usual" C. Bella Hazel



# Easy School Book Quesadilla Recipe

---

*If you're a book lover like me, than your motto is most likely "eat, sleep, and breath books." But how do you eat books? In this recipe, I'll help you turn that motto into a reality. (At least the eating books part.)*

## Things you need:

- Any type of cheese that melts\*
- Edible markers in fun colors\*
- 3-6 flour tortillas per serving\*
- Assorted veggies\*

## What you do:

Heat a skillet to medium heat.

Cut your tortillas into 2 inch by 3 1/2 inch rectangles and lace on skillet.

Warm them until light golden brown and have a semi-crispy edge.

Take off skillet and fill with cheese.

Fold in half for a bookish shape.

Microwave for about 15 seconds and more if needed as microwaves vary by model.

Unfold, and fill with sliced veggies.

Fold again.

On each quesadilla, write a school subject (see picture) in different colors using the edible markers.



## \*Notes

-I suggest using shredded cheese. The one I used (and made specifically for quesadillas) is called Chihuahua Cheese and you can find it at Costco in a red bag.

-You can find edible markers at most baking stores.

-Veggies include: avocado, tomato, lettuce, sweet peppers and anything else you'd like.

Dear Martha,

I want your honest opinion, from a book-a-holic  
to another book-a-holic,  
is there such thing as “reading too much”?  
My parents constantly say this all the time,  
but I never ever agree.

Sincerely,  
Lindy Lugar

Dear Lindy,

In my opinion, I don't think there is such a thing as reading too much. Unless it gets to a point where you are neglecting your other essential things like school or if you read in poor light, that could affect your health. So, read on! Just make sure you don't shut other people out of your life. It's perfectly fine to read a lot. Actually, it's great. Studies show that kids who read a lot in lower grades are proven to have higher test scores and have a more successful life. Especially if you read the classics.

Yours,  
Martha

# *Clarabella's Letters*

By Bella J. from Illinois

## *Day one of the Letter Search*

Every week there is a letter in our mailbox addressed to someone called Clarabella. I've never heard of a Clarabella until I found an old newspaper in my grandmother's attic. Here's what it said:

*Young nine year old Clarabella Johnson mysteriously disappears at her own birthday party. Her older brother, Colt Johnson, recalls, "I was a-eatin' my juicy watermelon slice with 'er, and havin' a conversation too. She told me she was hopin' for a special person to arrive, but they never came. She suddenly dropped her fruit and locked her eyes in the distance. She told me she'd be a' right back, but I never saw 'er again after that."*

All we know about Clarabella, is that she's gone. And possibly kidnapped. Unfortunately, no other evidence has been found to support or raise other theories. But, a creepy letter comes in every week from their daughter, so is she alive or dead? Copyright 1956.

Now, that spooked me out quite some bit. But on the bright side, I also caught a second newspaper from a few years after that last one was published. And it continued the Clarabella story.

Apparently, the Johnsons got so fed up with the letters, that they moved across the state. In the article, it showed the address of the old house: 714 Buckle Ln, Harland, Kentucky. That was *my* address!

"Val!" I heard my little sister Franny call from the living room. "Mommy's here!"

I shoved the newspapers in my pack and hustled downstairs to my mother. She pulled me into her arms and smiled. "Did Grandmother take good care of you?" she asked.

I nodded.

We went home, with those disturbing newspapers still lurking in my pack.

At home, my mother fixed me and my sister a PB&J sandwich for a quick snack. I tried to read Mom's expression. Was it worry? Uneasiness?

"Now girls," she said, "you know your dad died some time ago."

Oh, I knew where this was going. She was going to on and on about how great her date was with Martin Murphy at the new Italian restaurant. Oh, give me a break. I don't want any dirty men in our household at any time.

“Me and Martin love each other very very much, and we have decided we might want a life together,” Mother continued. *Blech!* “But we wanted to ask you girls first. So, what you think about having a daddy again?”

What did I think? What did I think?

“I don’t like it one bit!” I cried.

I tore up the stairs to my room in frustration, leaving my sandwich on the lonely porcelain plate.

Day two of the Letter Search:

I have a great progress report for mystery of Clarabella.

To start, I went back to my grandmother’s house to check out the rest of her old newspaper inventory (just me that is, no pesky sisters). I went straight to the attic after some cookies and lemonade and started my episode. I tore through the flimsy cardboard boxes and took out a bundle of papes.

One from a couple years ago read:

*61 years ago, a young girl called Clarabella Johnson eerily disappeared from her party. After she had vanished, some creepy, persistent letters were sent to the family. The FBI are hard at work trying to uncover where Clarabella is, but this story really reminds us that we should cherish our loved ones. You never know when their last moment with you is.*

I stuffed the paper in my bag and dashed downstairs. “Bye Grandmother! Got to go investigate the elderly!” I said as I opened the door to leave.

“Okay...but, here!” She tossed me a hardcover book. *Master the Art of Knitting and Crochet in a Year.* “Take this to Edna if you visit her, I’ve been needing to return it to her.”

I nodded and closed the door behind me.

I was strutting down the sidewalks to find houses with old people, when I noticed a mailbox with the word *Johnson* written on it curvy red writing.

*Clarabella Johnson. Hmm...*

I trotted up the porch and rang the doorbell. Seconds later, the door opened.

Out peeped a stout little woman. She had tight off-gray curls with a little bit of gold woven in too. She sported gorgeous multicolored eyes with small hints of gold as well. I noticed she had a smudge of some sort of batter on her mint green apron. So I concluded that I had interrupted a baking session.

“Why, hello there!” she said. “I don’t get visitors much.”

I curtsied. “Pleased to meet you, miss.” My mother told me to “respect my elders,” so here I am. “My name is Valencia Carnicelli,” I told her. “And I’m a junior investigator on a mission.”

“Oh, well, you seem very respectable. So whatever you need to do, I’ll allow it.” She invited me in.

After I asked her where the attic is, and what I needed from it, she sent me on my way. “But wait...uh, what did you say your name was, darling?”

“Valencia,” I said. “It’s Italian.”

“Ah, yes. Valencia. I forgot to introduce myself. I am Annabel Johnson. Now, that name may seem familiar to you. It’s true I’m related to that missing girl in the paper. I’m her sister.”

My mouth hung open.

“Yes, I know that’s shocking.”

I nodded.

“But, I can assure you, I don’t know what happened to her if you were wondering. I have already searched those papers upstairs for any hints, but I vetoed that long ago.”

“Oh.” I frowned. “Then I guess I don’t need to search your attic anymore. Anyway, thank you.”

I walked out the door and went home.

#### *Day three of the Letter Search:*

After my fail at Annabel’s house, I was about ready to give up on the whole ordeal. But when I found a huge piece of evidence, I pushed that silly thought away.

My mother let me on the computer for one last search when I finally found what I was looking for. I had typed in the key words, “Annabel Johnson” and multiple things came up like, “Annabel Johnson: Model for Bloomingdale’s,” and “Annabel Johnson: Worst Cook in America.” But I finally came to the right person.

It was a video of an interview with Annabel Johnson about her sister missing.

I clicked on it.

“So, Miss Johnson, what can you tell us about Clarabella?” the reporter asked.

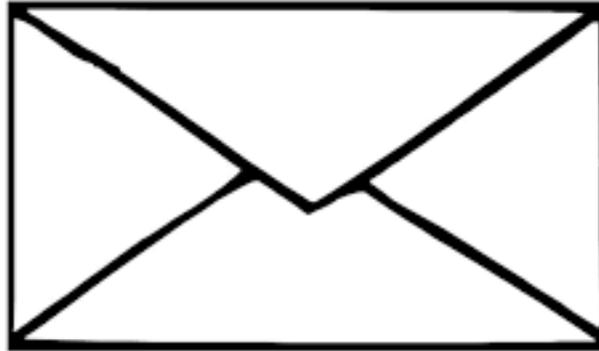
“Well,” said Annabel, “do you want to know who wrote the letters and where my sister went?”

The reporter smiled. “Yes, if you know.”

“The person who is writing the letters is Henry Callahaugh. He’s an old family friend. He couldn’t make it to the party and he thought it was his fault. He was writing to say how sorry he was. But oddly enough Clarabella had to go for the safety of her family. She was caught stealing an important relic from an illegal street shops her trip to Japan. And some super criminal took her back there. I

*know she's dead now, but in my opinion, she did a noble deed. Though that does not counter how much I miss her."*

BINGO! I have solved this mystery. But that doesn't make this seem any less creepy or sad. Also, Annabel had lied. She had found out the truth about Clarabella. That woman was going to need a talking-to...

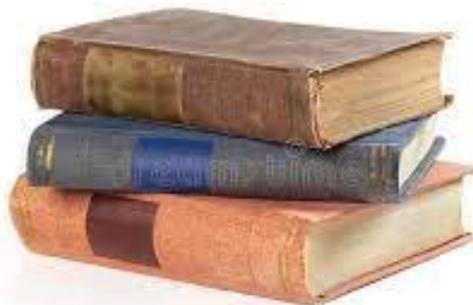


# Quiz!

## *What Kind of Reader Are You?*

- I. What is your reaction when you are interrupted while reading?
  - a. You are fine with it. You can just go back to reading later. No prob.
  - b. You're annoyed, but you manage to put your book down.
  - c. You wanna punch the interrupter. (Um, "Don't shoot the messenger"? Yeah, um, follow that.)
  
- II. You finish a 300-page book in about...
  - a. two weeks (or more).
  - b. one week.
  - c. three days.
  
- III. How do you feel when you finish a book with a cliff-hanger?
  - a. Fine. The author should come out with the next book soon enough.
  - b. Sad, but exited for the next book.
  - c. Like you wanna burn the author's books to smithereens.
  
- IV. You like to read...
  - a. anywhere!
  - b. somewhere comfy, but not necessarily quiet. A little noise is all right.
  - c. somewhere totally quiet.

*See the next page for your results!*



- **If you chose mostly a's...**

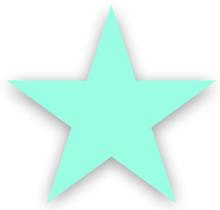
Then you are a content, quiet reader who likes to be cozy, silent and alone to read. You take your time reading. What's the rush? You might enjoy fairytales and fantasy. Myths are also a great option.

- **If you chose mostly b's...**

Then you are an average reader. You are mad when you are interrupted, but you don't have a tantrum. It takes you some time to finish a book, but you aren't a speedy maniac. You might enjoy realistic fiction and biographies.

- **If you chose mostly c's...**

Then you are a crazy reader. You gobble up books like candy, and interruptions bring out the hidden Godzilla in you. When your favorite book character is on the edge of a cliff then the book runs out of pages, well, lets just say we didn't know there was something worse than interrupting you. You might enjoy adventures and sci-fi.



**Worried about defacing  
your books?**

**Try giving these markers a try.**



*They erase easily and come in five  
pretty pastel colors!*

*Order now to get 10% off your purchase!*

# SHE: THE GIRL WITHOUT A NAME

By Bella J. from Illinois

***It is if thou wants it to be. That's what her father always said.***

She was a quiet girl. Probably because she had no name. No identity. Like a puzzle piece that did not belong to any puzzle. Doomed to wander forever.

You would have never guessed She used to be treated lavishly. Her dark stringy hair was drenched with oils because she had not taken a bath in ages. Her tattered frugal dress and leather loafers were couple sizes too small and her skin was scarred and caked with mud. A knife in a ruins sheath lay on her side. The only thing that came close to attractive was her dazzling eyes. They were...well, no one ever could figure out what color they were. Some folks from the towns she journeyed through reported she had blue eyes one day and green the next. Some days they were chocolate others a stormy gray.

She lived on the street. Well, not really. She just didn't have a home. It's complicated. Ever since she made a mistake at her former home, she was on the run from *Them*. She never stayed in a village long for she knew *They* were always on her tail.

She lived off the pity from kind people she met. Bakers gave her loaves of bread. Farmers gave her apples. And mothers tried to give her clothes, but She always refused. She needed to be reminded of her mistakes and past life—the one where she messed up.

Some days She wept for hours, regretting she was ever born. The only thing that kept her alive—the drive and purpose of her life—was what her governess, Amy Gingerfall, said to her when She escaped in the night.

*One day, this will all blow over. And though thee won't see me again, princess, thou will have a nice life somewhere else. Somewhere where thou will feel included.*

*Governess?* She had said. *You know what? I am never going to use my name again. My Lucian name.*

*That is wise choice. Do not tell anyone you are the princess of Lucia. Understand?*

*Yes. But will I ever see Father again?*

*One day, princess. One day.*

Those last words always brought back bittersweet memories. She loved how Amy called her “princess” even though she had done nothing worthy for such a title. “Peasant” was more accurate.



She chomped down an undersized lunch that a baker had given her from the latest village, and started out of town.

As she walked, She heard the sounds of midnight—owls hooted, as if mocking her. Moths fluttered in the air, trying to find list as their guided off the night. In the same way, She wished for a guide in the dark. But she couldn't she learned a few villages ago that it was best to travel alone. There was a smaller risk of getting caught that way.

Up above, the moon shimmered slightly and She grinned at the man. *My guide is thee*, she thought. *Thou know my path and can watch me everywhere.* Crickets chirped and scattered from the dirt path as she picked up her pace.

Behind her, footsteps boomed. She dove into a nearby bush, and—unfortunately—is a thorn bush. The thorns raked across her skin but she didn't notice. She was too petrified of the people.

“Where'd she go?” came a gruff voice.

“I swear the princess was a-walkin' down this path here just a minute ago, sir,” replied another man quietly.

“Well she ain't!”

She whimpered. Suddenly she realized who the gruff voice was.

A gunshot tore through the air and the man who was once alive just a minute ago dropped dead on the ground. “If y'all don't that to be yer fate—like Eddie there—then you gonna find the girl by the seventh day this week, ye hear?”

“Yessir,” the other men said in unison, their voices trembling.

“Good.” The man yawned. “The villagers said she passed through their ‘lil town to-day and that she let this way. So she’s either in these her woods, or they were a-lyin’.”

“Yessir.”

The men were scared of their leader, She knew it.

The man considered his loyal men. “Go search the town. Remember: ye have only ‘til the seventh day.”

Unaware and her guard down, She heard a noise behind her and the next thing she knew, her stars were punched out.



She woke in a wooden structure and from the smells of it, it was in the forest still. That was good news. At least her captors hadn't left the refugee of these woods.

To She's surprise, she was surrounded by a dozen kids. They all looked like her. Covered from head to toe with muck, sporting torn clothes, and wearing hopeless faces—a typical street kid and their lifestyle.

One girl stepped forward—her arms crossed across her chest in an intimidating position. She had coffee brown hair with bangs, and some fingerless gloves and pants with a blouse. Unlike She, this girl's eyes were one color—hazel. When she spoke, She resisted the urge to punch her for disrupting her travels. But her arms and legs were strapped to a chair. Though very poorly, she noticed.

“Who are you?” the girl asked.

“I'm not a-tellin’,” She snapped, mostly because she didn't *have* an identity. She ripped out of her bonds and kicked the girl. She tumbled back and She took the opportunity to escape—

Someone—a boy about her age—grabbed her arm. “We don't want to hurt you,” he said. “We found you by yourself. We thought you needed our help, but we need to know who you are first. Just to make sure you aren't a criminal or something.”

His eyes glimmered a gorgeous blue. An ocean of kindness. He had tufts of auburn curly hair on top of his head and a dimple on his left cheek. When he smiled, it seemed as if the entire room lit and all was good.

“And if I am?”

“If you are what?”

“A criminal. What if I am a criminal?”

The boy thought about this. He let go of her arm.

She didn't run away though. She wanted to know more.

The girl she had kicked was now recovered and standing up. “Your accent. It sounds... Lucian.”

“I don't know what thou a-talkin' about,” She said.

“Candice, please,” the boy said. “Let's not make assumptions.” He turned to She. “I'm Sam Lillogreen. And you are?”

She thought about this for a moment before finally saying, “Amy Gingerfall,” she confidently lied.

She turned to Candice, the girl she had punched. “I am sorry,” she said.

Candice grunted. “Just keep your distance, Amy,” she snapped.

Sam through his arms in the air. “Oh-kay! Amy, you are welcome to stay with us, if you'd like.”

“Who are ye children?” She asked.

Candice scoffed.

“We are the Forest Wardens,” Sam explained. “Our parents were massacred in the war, so we all just live in the woods. We take care of each other, hence our name. We are safe from the troops, and we have plenty to eat. Some of us ran away, though.” Sam's eyes drifted down as if that was the case with him.

She knew the feeling.

“I was a-hopin' to continue on with my travels...” When She looked around at the faces of the children, she felt like she needed to stay—at least for a little while. “But I could stay until the seventh day, I guess.”

The children cheered.

And inside, She smiled a bit.



That night, She dreamed of her mother and father.

Her father, Antonio was telling her a bedtime story.

*Do thou know of the tale, The Wolf's Song?* he asked his daughter.

*No,* She replied.

*Well, it goes somethin' like this: There once was a hunter. And this hunter was very poor and lonely. One day he and his friends went a-huntin'. This trip, they had to bring in fifty pounds of animal or else they ain't gonna get paid. And since the hunter was poor, he desperately needed that money.*

*So he and his friends split off in the forest; he went one dee-rection they went the other. As soon as his friends left, he heard howlin'—a wolf's howl. That was a good sign. So he followed the noise. But when he got there, the wolf was injured. It howled a mournful tune. and suddenly the hunter could understand the words—Well, not really words. They were like sounds, but he knew exactly what they meant.*

*What do thou mean, Father?* She wondered.

*Thou know when thou are a-lookin' at yer favorite piece of art—like "The Lady on the Old Swing"—thee know what thou feel, right?*

*Aye, of course.*

*Well, it was the same with this wolf's song and the hunter. The hunter shared the sadness of the song and understood the wolf was lonely. He felt it just by a-listenin' and a-watchin'. So a-feelin' the same, the hunter instead nursed the wolf back to health, instead of a-turnin' him in to the Hunters' Guild.*

*She smiled. That was a wonderful story, but Father?*

*Yes, my princess?*

*Is this a true tale?*

*It is if thou wants it to be.*



She woke to the sound of pots and pans clanging.

She sat up groggily to have a young girl in her face—Lou. “Hey there, Amy!” she shouted. “It’s time to go hunting for breakfast!” Lou jumped over She’s sleeping mat and skipped off to where the racket’s source.

She followed Lou and stopped abruptly when she took in the scene. All the older children—ranging from ages ten to fourteen—held swords or daggers. The younger kids held woven baskets with blackberry stains splattered inside. Sam stood at the front of the group holding a pot in one and a stick in the other.

He smiled. “Oh, good morning, Amy! This is just a standard third day protocol. We are going to hunt some rabbits and berries. You wanna come?”

Candice snickered. “She has to, or else she don’t get no food.” She looked murderously at She.

Sam handed She a dagger.

“No thank you,” she said. “I have my own.” She pulled out her knife—her most prized possession. It was an alluring rose gold metal and the inscription read, *Est quia si vult esse*, which meant, *It is if thou wants it to be*—her father’s famous saying. Below the inscription was a tiny picture burned in the metal of a moon lily—She’s favorite flower.

Sam leaned over her shoulder. “That’s beautiful,” he said.

“Looks Lucian,” Candice noticed.

“Candice!”

“What? I’m just stating something.”

“That’s okay,” She said. “I found it off a soldier’s dead body. I am sure he was Lucian.”

“What about your accent?”

“I reckon I passed through Lucia once. I stayed there the longest I assume.”

If Candice bought that, She couldn’t tell.

Sam broke the uneasy silence. “Oh-kay!” He looked around nervously. “Elena, Lou, Wallace, Theo and some other kids who I can’t remember their names, come on! Let’s go hunting!”



Sam and She took a bunch of kids including Lou and Theo to the east side of the forest where She caught a few rabbits and the little kids picked berries. Sam, on the other hand, caught only *one* rabbit.

“How do you catch so many?” he asked when She lugged in her fifth.

She just shrugged and said, “I used to do it a lot at my home. Oh, I ‘member when me and father would hold a contest every first day and...” She trailed off.

Sam put a hand on her shoulder. “I get it. You miss your old life. Most of us here do. Do you wanna talk about it?”

She stayed quiet.

“Well,” Sam said, “if you aren’t going to talk, I guess I will.” He took a deep breath. “I was born in a poor family. My ma and pop had just lost their jobs at the start of the war, and my little brother had just died from starvation. My parents had become so worrisome about money and me, that they became corrupted. So I left. I wandered for a while and then found Candice here in this forest. And we established the Forest Wardens. Children came from everywhere to join us. And, well, I guess you could say we’re a success. I haven’t shared any of this to anyone except Candice, since I was about four years of age. I still miss my ma and pop, but it’s my brother that I miss the most. Anyway, I don’t expect you to—”

“What was yer brother’s name?”

She’s comment surprised Sam. “Uh, it’s been a while, but if I can recall correctly it was Tomn.”

“I miss my horse and my father the most.” She was on the verge of tears.

“You had a horse? What, were you rich?”

“Thou could say that. Her name was Moon Lily, after my favorite flower. She was white and so fast. When she went a-runnin’ it was like her feet didn’t even touch the ground. What I would give to ride her one last time.”

“I’ve seen that flower on your dagger, right? And that phrase—what was it? Hopeless egg—”

She started to laugh. She pulled out her knife. “It says, *Est quia si vult esse*, Sam. Nothing about hope or poultry.”

“Whoops, my bad.” His face turned the color of a basket of tomatoes. “What’s it mean?”

“It was something my father use to say: *It is if thou wants it to be*. He ordered our blacksmith to forge this for me. I loved a-hangin’ with Tulley. He told the best jokes.”

“What’s that metal?”

“Lucian gold. It has a pink tint.”

Sam was grinning, though She had no idea why. “Why are thou a-smillin’?”

“You just told me you were Lucian.”

“I said no such—”

“It’s okay, I will not tell anyone. Not even Candice, if you wish. But why did you hide this? Is Amy even your name?”

She didn’t answer.

“Hey, I told you my deepest secrets. It is only fair you tell—”

“You know thou is very irritatin’ Sam Lillogreen.”

“Aye.”

“Oh, now thou a-mockin’ me?”

“Nay.”

She slapped her forehead. “Promise thou won’t tell?”

“Swear it on the Creator.”

“Alright.” She looked around at the other kids to make sure they were alone in their conversations. “I don’t have a name, and yes, I am Lucian.” that wasn’t the entire truth either, but she didn’t want to push her much with someone she just met.

“How can you not have a name?”

“I did a terrible thing in Lucia and ran away, or rather escaped from my fate. I have never gone by my Lucian name ever since. My governess, Amy Gingerfall, said I would one day find a new name, and thus a new life, but I am starting to think I am a ‘hopeless egg,’ in the words of thee.”

“I never said that!” Sam protested.

“I know.”

“Wait, so when and how do you get a new name?”

“Someone must grant me one.”

“Can I?”

“I don’t think I’d like the one thou would pick out. Just call me Amy for now.”

“Very well—”

Candice’s voice boomed across the forest: “Come on, you slowpokes! Get your bottoms over here! We’re all hungry!”

Sam and She along with their little berry-pickers scrambled over back to the hut and dumped their sacks and baskets in the cooking quarters. A girl about fifteen years of age was warming a pot over an open fire and another girl about twelve was washing the berries. The girl who was warming the pot lugged a dead rabbit from She’s bag onto a wooden board and prepared it for cooking. She had never seen such skilled and organized children.

Sam beckoned her to come sit by the other children, where they joked and told stories. She could tell Candice was impressed with her hunting skills, but she didn't dare admit it.

One boy, Wallace, who was nine years old, said he saw a creepy group of men patrolling the forest. “They carried big guns and they talked funny.” He turned to She. “A little bit like you, actually.”

She and Sam exchanged nervous glances.

“And,” Wallace continued, a sad look in his eyes, “one of them got Sesaeria.”

She didn't know who Sesaeria was, but if she had to guess, she would say she was Wallace’s older sister.

Wallace gazed at Sam hopefully. “Sam, we have to go get her!” he cried, tears building up his eyes.

Sam placed a hand on Wallace’s shoulder. “Don’t worry, Wallace. We’ll get her back. I promise.”

She wished Sam hadn't said that last part, for she already knew the girl’s fate.



Later, at night, Sam pulled She and Candice aside.

“We have to get Sesaeria back,” he said.

She shook her head. “That’s impossible. Ye don’t know how They are. I wouldn't be surprised if the girl is already dead.”

Candice punched her arm. "How can you say that? So what, we just give up hope? 'Sorry, Wallace. Amy here is too scared to face the guys who took your sister. Don't worry. Sesaeria's already dead. Whoops.'"

"Ye don't understand. Those men are ruthless. Believe me, I have witnessed it firsthand," She insisted.

Candice raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean? Who are they?"

She didn't answer.

"Answer me!"

"They are the Lucian King's Men. They guard their royalty. The king, the princess. At first thee may think, 'Oh that's good,' but do not be deceived by their title. They will stop at nothing to do their duty."

Sam rubbed his chin. "Isn't there a queen too?"

She winced. She hated this subject. "No, she died. Along with the heir to the throne, Carter."

"I never heard that."

"I reckon ye has to be in Lucia to hear about it. Which I was."

Candice jumped in. "So, what you are saying is that we shouldn't try to rescue Sesaeria."

She nodded.

"Well," Sam grumbled, "I'm going. And I need both of you to come along."

"Amy can go with you. I should probably stay here with the forest Wardens," Candice said.

Sam nodded. "Alright. Amy, pack your bags we leave at first light."



Sam seriously meant "first light".

Yet another day deprived from sleep, She arose from her slumbers and met Sam at the door.

"Ready?" he asked.

She nodded.

Minutes later, they settled down behind a tree near where they could hear gruff voices.

“Is that their camp?” Sam asked.

“I reckon. But we have to be careful—Hush! Someone is a-comin’,” She whispered. She pulled Sam and herself down on the grass. She waited for the noise to pass, but it didn’t.

“I could have sworn I saw somethin’,” one voice said. It sounded high and very squeaky. Like a teenager’s in the middle of puberty.

“Yeah right, Darrel,” said another man.

“No, really.”

Darrel inched forward and She started to panic.

She could feel Sam’s heart racing, just like hers. Her head was resting on his chest, both concealed in the brush. She recalled the same warm feeling in the wrong time. Just like when she left Lucia. The feeling when suddenly in the middle of danger, you feel loved and comforted. Like you belong.

Her breathing returned to somewhat normal as both men left their area. Sam and She sat up slowly, cautious not to make any sudden movements, before carefully and silently resuming their previous conversation.

“You were saying?” Sam wondered.

She sighed. “We have to be *very* careful. We will sneak in around the back. I reckon that is where they are a-holdin’ Sesaeria. When the lookouts make their rounds, we’ll slip in. Understand?”

Sam nodded.

Darrel and the other man passed in front of them again.

“*Now!*” She hissed.

Sam and She shuffled around and peeked inside the tent where they suspected Sesaeria was being held.

The young girl was tied to a chair and gagged. A man emerged from the left wall. Sam and She swiftly shut the curtain. They vaguely heard the man talking to Sesaeria. They figured he had ripped off her gag since she was also engaging in the talk.

“Sam and Candice and Amy will come for me, you wretched man!” Sesaeria shouted. “And when they do, they will kick your butt!”

The man laughed. "I'm sure. Sam and Candice and Amy...Wait, did you say 'Amy'? As in Amy Gingerfall, possibly?"

"What's it to you?" Sesaeria snapped.

Even though she was outside the tent and therefore could not see the man's face, She still knew that he had a slight smile on.

"Oh," he said, "I'm counting on that they come."

The man exited the tent and barely touched Sam. Sam plunged in when the man was long gone.

"Sam, no!" she yelled after him.

But he didn't listen.

She reluctantly followed him, and found herself in serious trouble.



Men surrounded her, and one held a knife to Sam's throat. She could see a faint trickle of blood.

"Let—him—go," She demanded.

The man guffawed. Then She knew who he was—Charles Doplín, the head of the Lucian royal guard. "Did you hear that lads? The princess wants me to let the boy go. Well, we can't do that, can we? No." Doplín shook his head. "Actually, the king'll will reward us greatly with his daughter's return."

Sam uttered a sound that was somewhere between a cough and a moan.

Doplín motioned to a comrade across the tent and before She could realize what was happening, a gunshot rang through the air and Sam dropped listless to the floor.

She screamed.

She pulled out her dagger and threw it, pinning Doplín to the large wooden crate behind him by his shirt collar. She took Sam's silver throwing knives and repeated her actions with the rest of the men in the tent. But she knew more men would hear the ruckus and come running to check it out. This meant she had to move fast.

First, she untied Saesaria and the little girl bolted towards the forest. Then She hoisted Sam and swung his arm over her neck. She hobbled out into the forest and met up with Saesaria.

“Saesaria,” She said, “go back to the Forest Wardens. Tell them Sam is hurt, but tell them not to worry. We’ll be fine. We cannot return to the camp because the kinsmen will be a-lookin’ for me.”

“But what about Sam? Is he going to be okay? He got *shot*, Amy,” Saesaria said.

“Yes, I know.” Tears welded up in her eyes. “I’ll find someone with medical supplies. Expect to see Sam by the winter if he...” She couldn't spit the words out, but thankfully, Saesaria understood.

The girl dashed deeper into the forest, while She and Sam started into town, which was risky business, considering the bounty on her head, but Sam needed medical help. And She didn't have any supplies.



Luckily, she found a sweet family who didn't seem to recognize her.

“He needs help,” She told the mother of the family.

“Yes, of course.” She turned to her children—a young lady about the age of eighteen, and a boy and girl with black hair that seemed to be twins. “Esmerelda, prepare a bed. Hugh and Sally, get the medicine kit from the bathroom.” She turned to She. “What’s your name, dear?”

“Amy. And yours?”

“Clara. What’s the boy’s?”

“S-sam.”

“Mother!” Esmerelda called. “The bed is prepared!”

She laid Sam on the bed helped in any way she could. She placed a wet cloth across Sam’s forehead and assisted with dressing the wound. All the while, Sam had remained very still and asleep. Then, out of nowhere, She heard a small sound: “Amy.”

She looked down at Sam. His eyes were open and he was grinning his usual goofy grin. She sobbed a sob of relief.

“Sam, I’m so sorry. I should have—”

Sam interrupted her, grabbing her hand. “No. *I* did a silly thing. I should have listened to you. Anyway, is Saesaria all right?”

“Yes. I sent her home.”

“Then where am I?” Sam tried to sit up, but he immediately cried out in pain.

She put her hand on his chest. “You need rest. Worry about these things when thou is better.” Truth was, She was incredibly scared for her friend. What if he *didn't* survive?

She cursed herself. *Don't think about such silly things*, she chided. *Of course he'll survive. He had to.*



When Sam woke next, he looked much better. And unfortunately, that meant he had a *lot* of questions.

The first one caught She off guard. She had expected him to ask the previously unanswered question about where he was, but apparently Sam had other plans.

“Are you...the lost Lucian princess?” Sam said with a quizzical look on his face. “That man...he said you were the king’s...daughter.”

She sighed. The truth was out. But there was still a chance to cover it up.

“No, you were delirious. He said I was the king’s *servant*,” She wanted to tell him. That would follow what her governess said: Do not tell anyone you are the princess of Lucia.

But was that honest? No. Did Sam deserve to know the truth even if it meant She had to disobey her governess? Yes.

“Yes.” That’s all she said. Just one word.

Sam smiled. Then he started to laugh. “I knew it all along, of course,” he said through his guffaws. “Only royalty would have a blade like yours.”

She was speechless. “Thee...what?”

“You aren’t that great of a liar,” Sam noted.

“Thanks.”

After Sam asked the rest of the questions he had on his mind, She and Sam were ready to go home to the forest wardens. Sam healed fast (thankfully), so they were able to get on there way by the afternoon.



“So...” She started when they were an hour in on their trip. She stopped and turned to Sam. “Sam, I cant go back to the forest wardens. After what happened to you...What if they think I was—”

“You’re right,” Sam said.

She blinked. “Uh...What?”

“You need to make up with your dad,” Sam explained. “We aren’t going to the forest. We are going to Lucia.”

“I guess...thee is right. Come on It not far from here.”

They trudged on for another two hours, when they stopped behind the wishing tree at the entrance of the city walls. There was an old Lucian legend that the first man plated that tree and so that it granted any true, clean heart one wish. The tree grew to be over forty feet tall and and never got sick.

And the rest of the Lucian landscape? Well, it was like a dream. In the evening light of pink and purple, the large lake mirrored the setting sun. Large rolling hills smothered in green grass and beautiful flowers lined the city, and many, many peaceful creatures roamed the woods as well.

“Okay,” She said to Sam, “We need to be quiet. We can’t be caught by the castle guards. We will sneak by and enter the castle through the back bakery entrance. Here are some cloaks.” She handed Sam a black poncho and pulled her own over her head. Sam i did the same. “Now come on.”

They walked towards the gate, head down. But a guard stopped them before they could get any further than the gate.

“Name and identification,” the guard said.

“We are the children of Miss Agnes the bakery chef. Our mother sent us to retrieve some ingredients from the next town over, but we forgot our baskets,” She replied.

The guard considered this. “Nice to see you back, Abby and John. Be quick about it.”

“Er, yessir,” Sam managed.

They scrambled through and entered the bakery when it came upon them. She talked to an old man and he pointed to a door in the back. She waved Sam over and they slipped through and found themselves inside the castle kitchen.

“Follow me. This way is the throne room,” She commanded.

“Alright,” Sam said.

By the time they got to the throne room, they had adopted so many personas that they forgot if Abby and John were servants or bakers or farmers.

The throne room was simple because King Antonio Rullarin was humble king, like all of the Lucian royalty before him. He loved his people and helped them in any way he could. But his main goal was to make sure there was no poor people who live on the streets. No poverty. That was why everyone lived comfortable lives.

The room was very tall with beautiful pillars and stained glass windows. Next to the King’s throne were a slightly smaller and a mini throne. For the queen and princess.

The king currently had an audience with a family who, She overheard, had just lost their entire flock of sheep by wolves.

“Don’t worry, Mrs. Shertle,” the king told the mother. “We’ll get thee yer sheep back by the fourth day next week.”

Sam and She walked up to the king’s advisor.

“We need to speak with the king,” Sam said.

“Of course. What are yer names so I can properly introduce thee?” the advisor asked.

Sam shuffled. “We are Abby and John the, er...”

“Baker’s children,” She supplied.

“Very well.” The advisor turned to the king. “Yer Majesty, may I present Abby and John, the Baker’s children.”

“Ah, yes. What bring thee here, children?” the King asked.

“Well—” Before Sam could finish, She pulled off her hood and revealed her face.

The king gasped.

“Hello, Father,” She said.

“Lily...” The king waved off his advisor. “Leave us.” Then he arose from his throne and walked over to his long-lost daughter. He put his hands on her shoulders and pulled her into a hug. “Gosh, after all these years...I never thought...” He pulled away. “Why didn’t thee come back?”

This was the part She was avoiding. “I couldn’t, Father. You know that. I don’t belong here.”

“Then why is thee here now with....?”

“Sam Lillogreen, Your Majesty,” Sam added helpfully.

“Well, maybe thee should ask Sam,” She grumbled.

“Hey! You were going to make amend with your kingdom either way. I was just pushing you in the right direction,” Sam defended.

“Lily, is thee going to stay?” the king asked.

“No.”

The king frowned.

“I have life somewhere else,” She explained. “And please do call me Lily anymore. I retired that Lucian name long ago.”

“I understand. But can you at least stay for one more day?”

“Of course.”

The king smiled. “Let’s get thee some new clothes, both of thee. Then well have dinner. How does that sound?”

She and Sam both smiled. “That sounds wonderful,” She said.

.....  
*\*Credits:*

*I credit my mom, Fabiola J. for the graphic design help. Cover photo: Fabiola and Bella J.; comic: Bella J.; Cover Story ad photo: Bella J.; Challenge photo: Bella Justice; The rest of the photos were found on Google Images, Shutterstock, Amazon.com, Pinterest, and Freepik.*

# epic!

The only reading app you'll ever need...  
With over 40,000 books to choose from, kids will  
love to read with this app.



Download it on the App Store today!