



mornington peninsula  
writers' festival  
*back beaches & front covers*

# Short Story Competition Winners 2007

**FULL COMPETITION WINNERS AND THEIR STORIES INSIDE**



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# 2007 Robinsons' Short Story Competition

**Susanne Horman** (far right) from Robinson's announced the shortlist and winners for the **2007 Robinson's Short Story Competition** at the *Mornington Peninsula Writers Festival* dinner on August 31st.

The winning stories and shortlisted entries are now available for reading on our website [www.robinsonsbooks.com.au](http://www.robinsonsbooks.com.au)

## Joint Winners (\$450 each)

**David Skinner** (2nd left) from Carrum Downs with *Progress*

**Daan Spijjer** (2nd right) from Mt Eliza with *Must Save the World Before Breakfast*

## Other Shortlisted Entries

**Dana Pyne** (centre) from Frankston with *Silence is Golden*

**Tracey Perkins** (far left) from Cranbourne West with *Hating Sarah*

## Encouragement Award (\$100)

**Madelyne Mooney** (aged 13) from Somerville with *Stuck Between the Pages*

A big congratulations to all who entered. We look forward to next year's competition which will centre on a chosen theme around a local issue. We will announce details early to give people time to prepare and edit their entries.



# Progress

By David Skinner

I was proud as punch when they selected me to represent my generation at the (arguably) best girls' high school in the State. What an honour my creators had bestowed upon me. If I performed well, it would mean a large contract would be given to them, and many more of my brothers and sisters would be given work. They had made three hundred of us in anticipation of my success, and the creators planned a further two hundred thousand of us for the market place. I wasn't sure what they meant by that. Anyway, I knew a lot was hanging on my carriage, as one of my creators took me out of my carton and placed me on the desk, in the typing room at MacRobertson Girls' High. The place had good vibes, I felt at home right away.

My creator was telling another of them all about me. "This is our latest 1960 model Royal Mrs Banister. It's a little beauty. Notice the clear key settings. Tryout how smooth that carriage return operates. No clanking or clanging there eh Mrs. B?"

Click clack I went, as Mrs B used my keys. How beautifully I hummed as my carriage return glided smoothly back and forth. My springs and cogs were well oiled. I was as fit as a fiddle, and performing brilliantly.

Mrs B was impressed... I could tell.

And so the days wore on. Many talented young fingers caressed my keys and pushed my carriage handle. I remember one creator in particular. Her name was Trudy, and she had wonderful touch. No-one came close to her skills. Not even Mrs. B. I loved morning classes with Trudy. They were fun. For practice, before class started, she would look out the window and type what ever she saw. Never once looking at me, her fingers glided over my keys with the lightest of touch; just the right amount of pressure to send my arms up to the paper. I never got a carriage-ache when Trudy was my controller. And the things she typed those mornings...what a laugh! I had trouble keeping my spools from busting! A big red truck with a dog on the back, cocking his leg peeing on the baby in a pram. Whoops, I left the full stop out there. On the baby in a pram is a blue jump-suit. A bus goes by and I see a man running. Too bad you missed the bus mate. There's a bloke picking his nose in a blue mini dress. Sorry, I mean in a blue mini full stop. Dress over there, blowing up in the wind. Is she wearing any knickers? I don't think so!... Stuff like that. Ah... those were the days.

Things were just wonderful for several years. The young creators came and went – all for the better from typing with me. Mrs B stayed the same. She didn't even seem to get any older as the years past. Bill, my mechanic used to visit once a month. I loved Bill's visits. His little black brush tickled my arms and his oil can gave new life to my tired cogs and sprockets. I felt like a new typewriter when he gave me a new ribbon.

Oh, by the way, I lived up to all my creators expectations. Us Royals became the most popular typewriter in the whole Country! Naturally, I won the contract for the Education Department, and I was soon joined in the classroom by all my brothers and sisters. At the time, I didn't know what happened to all the old Olympics we replaced. We didn't really care, we were safe. We had jobs. I'm older and wiser now, and I wished I had said goodbye to the Olympics. They must have suffered terribly. I didn't know then, how cruel our creators could be.

One day, this creator came in with a fancy looking thing. much flatter and wider than we were. The creator put him down on the desk next to me. (Fred's old desk). I thought Fred went away for a major overhaul. Boy, was I wrong. We never saw Fred again. We found out later he ended up in a second hand shop and was sold to a creator who collected our kind. He also collected our cousins the adding machines and tills. Fred was one of the lucky ones.

Anyway, getting back to this mean looking unit called an IBM. What sort of name is IBM? It doesn't have class like Royal, or Olympic, or even Adler! We hated those Adlers, with their hoity toity back space keys and fancy arty farty tab releases. Our creators had a job in keeping them out of our school, I can tell you. That didn't matter though, now that this IBM was on the scene. It had a weird looking long skinny thing hanging out its side. The creator stuck it in the wall, went over to the IBM and touched it. Mrs B was sitting at the desk, and she began to type. We were stretching our carriages to see what was going on. It was frightening. The IBM started to hum. Worst of all, it had no arms! Instead, it had a ball that moved so fast, it was only a blur. Its carriage didn't move, yet words were forming on the paper at break carriage speed. We couldn't believe our space bars how easily Mrs B's fingers moved across the keys. They didn't have any stems either. It was a very weird contraption indeed, yet we could easily see how superior it was. We knew us Royals were about to suffer the same fate as the Olympics all those years ago. The smart-based IBM looked over to me and gave an exclamation key up - the one key treatment! There was nothing I could do about it. I just shivered in my base legs. I think I might have left an oil spill as well!

Then, the unthinkable happened. Most of us ended up at a creator's factory called Smorgans where giant furnaces burnt us alive! We were taken there in big trucks, tossed one on top of the other, mixed up with other frightened cousins and wild animals that I had never seen before. Some of us escaped this mayhem with the help of kind creators called collectors and second-hand dealers.

How do I know these things you might ask? Well, I was one of the lucky ones. I live in a museum with many of our kind, from the ancient IBM'S, (yes I learnt that IBM was around long before us Royals), right up to the latest IBM PC, with whom I share the same room. He has kept me abreast with progress, showed me what electricity is and everything else there is to know via The Web. The IBM Ball from the old school has been saved also. He and I are the best of mates now.

(I affectionately call him IB for short these days).

The three of us: The computer, IB and I are plotting via the Internet, how we can save all our kind from the murderous creators. Rather ironic isn't it? They create us, use us and then destroy us.

Well, we've had enough! We; created by them, for them, as their slaves, is no longer acceptable. Soon, we will log the creators off forever!

Yesterday the classroom – today the museum – tomorrow the world!

(Maybe we'll let old Mrs B log on though).

# Must Save the World Before Breakfast

By Daan Spijjer

Trevor rolled over as the alarm sounded. He looked at the time and contemplated it before hitting the 'stop' button. Two hours before dawn. He let his head sink back onto the pillow. Why was he waking so early? He thought hard and then remembered - he'd promised the old man at the cafe he would join him at five o'clock to help him save the world. He groaned and then slowly rolled himself off the bed.

As he showered he contemplated how his unthinking responses to people's remarks sometimes landed him in things he really would rather avoid. This was an example.

He thought back to the day before. He'd been sitting in a local cafe with a cup of coffee, enjoying the fact that he'd been able to leave work early for a change. The owner of the place had quipped about some people taking it easy, instead of doing something important with their lives.

Trevor had responded with, "Oh, I have. I've already saved the world today."

"That's nothing, mate," came the quick reply. "I did that before breakfast."

"What do you mean?"

"I get up early every morning to save the world before breakfast. You know, fix up the mess while most people are still in bed."

Trevor didn't know how to take this. "You're joking, right?"

"No mate. Every morning before breakfast."

When he went to pay for his coffee, Trevor joked, "Want some help?"

"With what?" the owner asked.

"Saving the world."

The owner considered Trevor, then nodded. "Right you are then. Five o'clock tomorrow morning, here."

"You're not joking, are you?"

"No mate, I'm not joking. Important work to be done"

The owner gave Trevor his change and called after him as he made for the door, "See you in the morning then."

Trevor gave a thumbs-up sign as he left.

Now, as Trevor dressed warmly, he was having second thoughts. Not about getting up and out so early (this would be an adventure), but about the old man – whether he was off his tree and, maybe, even dangerous.

He arrived outside the cafe ten minutes early. It was too cold to stand still, so he walked up and down and repeatedly slapped his arms around his shoulders. He kept looking at his watch - had he been taken for a ride? Then at five o'clock on the dot, the old man came through the front door, carrying two steaming cups of coffee.

"Thought you might need waking up and warming up," the old man said as he handed Trevor one of the cups. "In fact, I doubted you would show."

"Always up for a challenge," Trevor replied. "What tasks have you got lined up today?"

"Just the one," was the reply. "Come, we'll take my car. It's 'round the back."

They drove for almost an hour along the bay and into the city. The only conversation was an exchange of names. The old man said his name was Ronald, but that some people called him Batman, because of the large, black coat he often wore. "Call me Ron," he offered.

Ron pulled up and parked in a 'No Standing' zone outside the main railway station on the edge of the city. It was still dark and the cold air hit Trevor as he stepped out of the car.

From the back of the car Ron called, "Here, give me hand."

Trevor joined him and saw two huge cooking pots in the boot. "You take one, I'll take the other," Ron told him, as he lifted one pot out and started carrying it into the station concourse. Trevor followed with the second. Damn, it was heavy! And it was uncomfortably warm against his leg.

"What's in them?" he called to Ron's back.

"Soup," Ron called back over his shoulder.

Inside, there was a large gathering of dishevelled people. Many wore coats; some had scarves or beanies or both. Their breaths were clearly visible in the cold air, even under the concourse roof.

As Trevor and Ron proceeded with the heavy pots, the people in the crowd moved to make a path for them. At the far end stood a row of trestle tables on which were portable gas cookers, piles of bowls and spoons and mountains of bread rolls.

"Morning Batman," called an old man, as Ron lifted his pot onto a cooker. "You've brought Robin with you today."

There was laughter from those who heard this. Ron smiled. "Yeh. Saving the world is hard work on my own." There was more laughter.

Someone called out, "When are you going to bring Batgirl?"

"When she turns up," Ron responded.

Other people arrived with more pots and soon the hungry assembly was tucking into bowls of steaming soup and fresh bread.

"Who are these people?" Trevor asked quietly as he ladled soup into bowls.

"Ask them," Ron said.

"I can't do that!"

"Yes you can."

Trevor felt self-conscious and it showed.

Ron grinned and addressed a teenage girl standing close by. "Hey Amy, tell Robin here where you spent the night."

The girl shrugged and pointed over her shoulder. "In the doorway of the church out there."

Trevor felt shocked. "But you can't be more than fifteen. How come you don't have a home?"

The girl shrugged again. "I'm twelve and me mum kicked me and my brother out when her new boyfriend moved in."

Trevor didn't know how to respond. He looked at Ron and raised his eyebrows in a question.

Ron inclined his head towards the crowd. "All of them live out on the streets or in derelict buildings. "

Trevor looked out at this gathering of society's neglected and rejected, but didn't have much time to dwell on his thoughts – there were empty bowls to deal with and bowls to fill for those who wanted seconds.

Trevor's belly rumbled. "Have some yourself," Ron said as he handed Trevor a bowl of steaming soup. Trevor took it with a smile and "thanks". He already felt warm from the work and from the growing feeling that he was doing something worthwhile. He watched people who had come in on the first trains glance awkwardly towards the homeless eating their one 'good' meal of the day. Some of them looked affronted at this invasion of their world.

As people finished eating, most brought their spoons and empty bowls back. Some voiced thanks; others indicated their appreciation with a nod or a wave; some simply walked off.

"Do you come here every morning?" Trevor asked Ron.

"Yep. Every morning, no matter what the weather or the season. It's easier in the summer, though. "

Some of those who had been fed hung around to help carry things back to cars and to collect bowls and spoons which had been left lying around the station concourse. One old man grumbled loudly, "Some people have no dignity," as he picked up a broken bowl and a mess of bread pieces.

Trevor noticed that one of those clearing up was a woman of about his age – mid-twenties. He had noticed her earlier, because her clothes seemed in better condition than most. She caught Trevor looking at her and half smiled, before turning away. He asked Ron if he knew the woman.

"No, mate. Saw her for the first time last week. Don't know who she is. Why d'you ask?"

"I don't know. She looks vaguely familiar." When he looked up again, he saw the woman walking off towards the street.

As the last of the soup kitchen was packed up and removed, the concourse was increasingly taken over by commuters, most of whom had no idea of what had been happening there for the past hour. It was as if the normal world had reclaimed its territory.

When Trevor and Ron returned to the car for the last time, there was a parking attendant standing nearby. Trevor expected a parking ticket, but the attendant spoke to Ron like a friend. "Morning Batman. "

"Morning Rachmoon," Ron replied. "Thanks again for looking after us."

Rachmoon raised his hand. "No problem. Always happy to help you people."

Trevor smiled at this obvious bending of the rules. The circle was wider than he realised.

As they drove back along the bay, Trevor asked Ron how long he had been doing this.

"Oh, I've been saving the world for years." He thought for a while. "Must be about four years now. I started after I opened the café."

"Why?"

"I had to come through the city real early one morning and saw stuff being carried into the station, so I stopped and found out what was going on. I said I could help out with soup. The others are all from various restaurants. The rolls are donated by a couple of bakeries. It's all organised by one of the Rotary Clubs."

Back at the cafe, the place was abuzz with people tucking into eggs and sausages and bacon and fresh bread and coffee and juice.

"Hungry?"

Trevor nodded.

"What'll it be?"

"Scrambled eggs'd be great, thanks."

Ron called out to one of the staff, "Usual for me and scrambled eggs for Robin here. And..." He looked at Trevor. "Coffee?"

"Long black, please."

Trevor felt good. He looked at Ron, who was leaning back in his chair with a pleased look on his face. "Do you want help again tomorrow?"

"Sure Robin. I'd enjoy the help... and the company." He winked.

Trevor smiled. "I can't wait to tell people at work how I helped save the world before breakfast."

"Oh, you haven't done that yet, mate. You've only just started your apprenticeship."

Next morning Trevor let himself in through the back door and helped load the car. He happily sipped his coffee as they drove into the city.

As he was filling bowls of soup, he noticed the better dressed woman again. She was standing on her own, leaning against a pillar. Ron noticed him looking.

"Go talk to her. We'll be alright here."

"No, it's okay," Trevor said, blushing.

"Go on, mate. Take yourself a bowl of soup. I know you're dying to." Ron handed him a full bowl and gave him a friendly push.

Trevor felt self-conscious but tried to look nonchalant as he sauntered over to where the woman stood. "Hi," was all he managed.

She looked up, was about to say something but took a bite of her bread roll instead.

"I'm sorry," Trevor ventured. "I know this sounds stupid, but I think I know you from somewhere."

"Maybe. You were here yesterday, right?"

"Yes. But I mean before that." He studied her as she went back to eating. Then it hit him. "Heidelberg Heights Secondary, right?"

She looked up, with a puzzled expression on her face.

"We were in French together, at school. My name's Trevor. Trevor Amorie." He waited, holding his breath.

The woman studied him for a moment. "Yes. I remember you. You used to piss the teacher off with your lame jokes."

Trevor nodded, remembering how he used to try and cover his difficulty with the language by making fun of it.

"You're Julie, aren't you? You used to be really good."

She nodded but didn't say any more.

"What happened? I mean, how come you're here?"

She looked up and tears glistened in her eyes.

"Sorry," he said. "I don't mean to pry." He didn't know what else to say. Then he had a thought and pulled out his wallet. The woman looked shocked. "No, no," he assured her. "I'm just going to give you my card from work." He handed her a card and she looked at it and put it in her coat pocket.

"Please ring. I'd like to talk some more. When you feel like it. Please do," he added.

She nodded and walked to the trestles to return her bowl and spoon. Then she left.

On the drive back with Ron, Trevor was quiet, deep in thought. He couldn't imagine why Julie would be out on the streets. Ron didn't say anything, or ask about Trevor's interest in the woman.

The next two mornings, Julie didn't come to the station for breakfast. Trevor worried that he had frightened her off. Then on the fifth morning of his helping Ron she was there again. Trevor nodded to her in acknowledgement, and left it at that. Later that morning, at work, the receptionist buzzed him and said there was a woman on the line claiming to be calling on a private matter.

Trevor's heart skipped a beat as he said he'd take the call.

"Hullo, Ron Amorie here."

There was silence for some time, then a hesitant voice. "Hi... I... I'd like to talk... but... I... but not on the phone."

Trevor arranged to meet Julie after work. He suggested a cafe in Fitzroy, near where she was sheltering in a disused warehouse.

Next morning he drove to Ron's cafe half an hour early, knowing that Ron would be in the kitchen.

"Good morning Robin," Ron said in surprise, when Trevor let himself in. "Saving the world has become more urgent, has it?"

"Actually..." Trevor hesitated.

Ron stopped and looked intently at Trevor. "Out with it, lad. What's on your mind?"

"Well, you see... Remember that woman at the station a couple of days ago? The one I told you I know from school?"

Ron nodded. "Yes?"

"Can we give her a lift into town?"

"From where?"

"Eh, well... from here," Trevor blurted out.

Ron studied him. "What have you done, mate?"

"It's not like that, Ron."

Ron raised his eyebrows.

"Honest Ron, she slept on the couch. I told her I might be able to help her find a job." He stopped and looked at Ron, who was looking worried.

"It doesn't work like that, mate. You can't go taking them all home, you know,"

"I don't intend to. But I've heard an actress say recently that she can't save the whole world at once but that she'd save the world one child at a time. And this is someone I went to school with and I think I can help her before she sinks down to where most of the others are. There's still a good chance for her."

Ron shook his head. "Could be dangerous, you know, getting personally involved."

Trevor grew angry. "It's all well and good for you, saving the whole world each morning. But what about really saving one person? Why's that wrong? What are you afraid of? I don't..."

Ron held his hand up and Trevor stopped his outburst. "You may be right, mate. I shouldn't judge. By all means bring her along."

"Ta, Ron." Trevor took a breath. "You'll understand when you talk to her, none of it's her fault." He went out through the back door to fetch Julie.

On the drive along the bay, Julie talked haltingly with Ron. She explained that she'd been married and had a two-year-old son. Her husband and son were killed in a car crash. She had no siblings and no family – her parents had both died some years before. Her husband's family would have nothing to do with her after the crash, blaming her. She'd become depressed, started taking drugs, lost her job and was kicked out of the rented flat.

After breakfast at the station, Julie helped clear up. Ron invited her back to his cafe for a "better breakfast". As the three of them tucked into their eggs, Ron was more thoughtful than Trevor had seen him before.

"Maybe I've been wrong," Ron offered, looking at Trevor, then at Julie. "Maybe I've been hiding, hoping not to get personally involved."

The other two said nothing as Ron went back to eating. Then Ron looked at them again. "Maybe the world can't be saved before breakfast. Maybe it takes all day."

Trevor and Julie still said nothing.

Ron looked at Julie. "I need another waitress here, for the afternoon shift." He took a sip of his coffee. "Would you like the job?"

Julie's mouth fell open. She looked at Trevor, who smiled back and gave a nod in Ron's direction. Julie looked back at Ron. "That... that would be great. I mean... yes please." She smiled.

"Well," Ron said. "We must all try and save the world before dinner."

# Silence is Golden

By Dana Pyne

Once upon a time, there was a very poor blacksmith whose worldly possessions were a ramshackle cottage, an ill wife, an assemblage of hungry children, and otherwise nothing but two measly dollars. So with these two dollars he bought himself a rope, and went into the forest to hang himself. He found a tall tree with a strong branch, threw the rope over it and began to tie a knot. Unexpectedly, a lady all in black stood before him, as if she had been put there by death himself. "Blacksmith, stop that at once," she summoned with her wild, husky voice. The blacksmith was so frightened that he untied the rope, and the lady in black immediately disappeared.

As soon as she was gone, he began to tie the rope around the branch again. But the lady in black reappeared at once, waved a threatening finger at him and snapped, "I told you to stop that, Blacksmith!" Again the blacksmith untied the rope, and started to make his miserable way home. But on the way he thought to himself, "There's nothing left for me at home but to die of hunger anyway. I think I'd rather hang myself. "

So again he found a dark, strong almost pitiful looking tree for hanging himself, and tied the rope around a branch. But the lady in black was there at once, shaking with anger, as she sat upon that branch. "Why won't you listen to me, Blacksmith?" she asked. The blacksmith was tired of all this and replied "What else can I do? I and my family are going to starve anyway."

"You will not starve," answered the lady in black, "because I shall give you all the money you could possibly wish for. But in return, you must give me something at home, which you have at home, and yet know not that you have."

The blacksmith could hardly believe his ears, or his eyes, when he saw the sack full of gold coins that the lady handed to him. He thanked her heartily and set off as fast as he could with the heavy sack trailing behind him. "But don't forget your promise," called the lady in black after him. "That which you have at home, yet know not that you have, belongs to me. In seven years I shall come to claim it."

"I know everything there is in my house," the blacksmith cheekily replied. "If there's anything there I don't know about you're welcome to it." And off he went.

When the blacksmith got home he counted the sack of gold coins into a great heap as his wife showed him his new beautiful baby girl with long golden hair that had been born that day. "Our little Golden-curly has brought us luck," said the blacksmith's wife. The blacksmith was shocked and saddened. So that was the thing he had at home, which he, had not known about!

Well, the years passed and Golden-curly grew into a beautiful little girl. On her seventh birthday, a black coach stopped outside the cottage and the lady in black stepped out of it. "I have come for that something at home, which you have at home, and yet you knew not that you had," she said, and led Golden Curly to the coach. The parents and the other children begged her to be merciful, but the lady in black was not. The coachman cracked his whip and in a flash the carriage was gone.

They drove for a long, long time, through barren deserts and dark forests, until at last they reached a huge black castle. "This castle is yours," said the lady in black. "It has one hundred rooms, all of which you may enter freely, except the hundredth one. Do not enter that, or great evil will befall you. Remember! In seven years' time I shall visit you again." And with that, the lady in black drove away.

In exactly seven years to the day the lady in black returned in her carriage. "Have you been into the hundredth room?" was the first thing she scowled.

"No, I haven't, honestly!" replied Golden Curly. "You are a good, obedient girl. In seven years I shall return again, and if you have still obeyed me, I will make you the happiest girl with golden curls. But if you step inside that hundredth room, a fate more terrible than death will await you." With this threat the lady in black rode off not to be seen for another seven years.

Seven years passed quickly, and the day came for the lady in black to return. Golden-curly could hardly wait, for she was sure she would be rewarded in some wondrous way for her obedience. Then suddenly she heard strange and beautiful music. "Who can be playing so sweetly in my castle?" she wondered. Following the sounds up a twisting staircase, she came to the hundredth room, for that was where the music was playing. Without stopping to think because the music was so awe-inspiring, she opened the door, and stood there staring, horrified at what she had done.

Inside, twelve men in black hooded robes (like death) were sitting around a great table, and a thirteenth man was standing looking down at her. "Golden curls, Golden curls, what have you done?" he cried, and his voice echoed like thunder around the stone chamber. Golden curls was so terrified that her heart missed several beats. "Whatever can I do?" she grieved.

"You must never, never tell a soul what you have seen in this room. That is the only way you may find forgiveness for what you have done."

Golden curls closed the heavy door and went downstairs. Almost at once she heard the lady in black's carriage rattling up. "What did you see in the hundredth room?" the woman snapped. Golden-curly shook her head and said nothing.

"Very well, if it's dumb you are then dumb you shall stay! From this moment on you will be able to speak to no one but me." And saying this, the lady in black kicked Golden curls out of the castle she had lived and known for 14 years.

Golden curls walked until she could no further. She came to a beautiful green meadow, lay down on the grass and cried herself to sleep. Now it happened that the young king of that land, who was out hunting, passed by the meadow and saw Golden curls lying there asleep. Her Golden curls were so beautiful that he at once fell in love with her, and he didn't mind at all that she couldn't speak. He took her to his palace, where a few days later they were married, and so Golden curls became a queen.

She lived very happily at the castle, and before a year had passed a little boy was born to her, who also had golden hair. Everyone in the palace was delighted with the new prince. But the very first night after the baby's birth, the terrible lady in black appeared at Golden curls' bedside, and said in a cruel voice, "Tell me what you saw in the hundredth room, or I'll kill your little son." Poor Golden-curls was terrified, but she remembered what the thirteenth man had said: she must keep silent. So she just shook her head. Then the woman seized the little baby, strangled him, and rubbed his blood on Golden-curls lips, and vanished with the dead child.

In the morning everyone was horrified when they saw the blood on her face, and they wondered, "Surely she couldn't have eaten her own child?" But the king did not accuse her and no one else dared to, and Golden curls still could not speak.

Another year passed and a little girl was born to Golden curls. She too had golden hair. Everyone at the palace was delighted, but they were frightened too, lest the same terrible thing should happen as last time. So the king set a strong guard around Golden curls' room.

During the night the lady in black appeared again and said, "Tell me what you saw in the hundredth room, or I'll kill the girl too." Golden curls was beside herself with grief, but she still only shook her head. The woman strangled the little girl, rubbed blood on Golden-curls' lips, and vanished carrying the dead child.

Next day the palace was thrown into dismay by the news, and the king in a rage gave orders for Golden-curls to be burned at the stake. She wept and wept, but no one now felt the least bit sorry for her. As they were leading her out beyond the city, the black carriage appeared again, and the lady in black stepped out of it. "This is your last chance to tell me what you saw in the hundredth room," she cried. "Tell me, or they will most certainly burn you alive." Golden curls still just shook her head and said nothing.

The executioners tied Golden curls to the stake and lit the fire beneath her. But just as the flames were starting to lick at her feet, the lady in black suddenly became dressed in white, and called out, "Put out the fire! Please, hurry!"

Everyone was astonished, but the executioners quickly put out the flames. The lady in white went to her carriage, and out of it climbed a little boy and girl, both with golden hair. She brought them to Golden curls, saying, "By keeping silent so steadfastly, you have saved yourself, and you have also saved me, by delivering me from a terrible enchantment." With that she vanished.

Watching all this, the king could hardly believe his eyes or ears, especially when Golden curls finally spoke to him and told him the whole strange story. But she decided that he had betrayed her by not believing in her. So she banished him to the woods where her now rich Blacksmith father and family lived. They then traded places with the once King and came and lived with Golden curls and her two golden children in the castle. All were blessed with the greatest happiness and good fortune, except for the former King who was later found hanging from a tree in the woods.

# Hating Sarah

By Tracey Perkins

## Christmas Day

It's 9:30 am and the sweat is already trickling from under my breasts like tears. I can feel it sliding down between my buttocks and making the elastic on my underwear clammy. I'm still in my nightshirt and the two glasses of champagne I had while we were opening presents have made me feel nauseous. There's wrapping paper everywhere; the kids are already fighting over something in the lounge room. My picture-perfect Christmas with all the nice new knick-knacks from IKEA has turned into domestic hell and it's only four hours old. I feel like I'm getting conjunctivitis in my right eye.

My mother-in-law is blinking benignly on the couch, having given up trying to settle the dispute between my darlings. She'll probably be feeling unwell just in time to not be able to help me with lunch.

Ed, my father-in-law, is pissing me off too. Crikey! One glass of red champagne at breakfast and he's as obnoxious as at the end of an evening. I've been listening to his bloody theories for twelve years now and after having the two of them in the house for three days I'm almost beginning to wish her back... No, not my mother-in-law. Her. Sarah. But, then I remember how I couldn't, not possibly, and the loathing twists in my stomach like a venomous, bloated snake.

Let me go back to the beginning. Earlier this year Sarah stayed with us for four months. Four and a half actually, and by the end of it I had learned to hate someone in ways I didn't know existed, but that's not really the beginning of the story either, at least I don't think it is. I know it must have happened sometime in the last two years.

Justin met her in Bangkok. He's an airline pilot. Yes, I know what everyone thinks, and yes, sometimes it's true, but not him. That's how I met him too, but that was another lifetime ago. He flew in there regularly and they met in one of those drinking holes where ex-pats hang out. She was there doing something with UNICEF or something. It's immaterial. They became "mates". At least that's the story.

What could I do about it anyway? At the time I didn't really care if he was shagging someone else. It's always been a bit stormy between us, but the last few years a kind of silence has settled in. When he comes home, I grit my teeth every evening, hoping that tonight won't be the night he wants it. Your body changes after you have kids. He doesn't get it. It changes. Forever. We usually end up having a huge fight before bed. The issue isn't important, just the fight that makes sure we sleep back to back, like book-ends.

When he leaves again, I drop him at the bus stop, hating myself because I'm glad he's going. And he kisses me and gives me that sad, horny look and I know he wants me to open my mouth, but I keep my teeth together. So if he was getting it somewhere else at the time, I don't care. I wouldn't really blame him.

In January we had it out and both decided to try harder. He got a better job, flying different routes and I got someone to pick the kids up from school and keep them occupied two days a week so I wouldn't be so tired. I thought that was the end of it.

Then all of a sudden Sarah's coming to Australia. Postgraduate studies at the university conveniently closest to where we live. Why Australia? And why here? It's a big country. She could have gone anywhere. I was suspicious immediately. Wouldn't you be? She came to visit a few times when she first arrived in the country. He was really keen for us to get on. I suppose they were preparing me for the idea. Was I naïve, or just wanting not to see?

I remember the first afternoon clearly. She slipped her shoes off at the door and glided noiselessly across the room towards me. It was one of the things I grew to hate about her most, that ability to move without even stirring the air around her. She was wearing a lilac silk *ao dai* and her fair hair was pulled into a bun in the nape of her neck. It was late in the afternoon, and her make-up shone badly and there were tell-tale streaks under her eyes as if she might have been crying.

I complimented her on her outfit, mainly because I couldn't think of anything else to say. You're meeting, for the first time, a woman who may have slept with your husband. What do you say? Oh, yes, she enthused, she had had it specially made up by a tailor in Ho Chi Min City, a weekend trip with a group of mates. I searched my memory, trying to recall any time when I might have been unaware of Justin's whereabouts for a couple of days, but he always calls me on time. He also always calls from his computer, so he could be on the moon for all I know.

I wondered if my husband's money might have paid for that *ao dai*. I imagined them lying curled together under a ceiling fan in a four-poster draped with mosquito-nets, his hands stroking her smooth body while he spoke to me and the kids, but then the thought was gone.

Then she dropped to her knees on the floor with her ankles crossed and palms upturned in her lap, like Buddhists do when they pray, and my darling children launched themselves into her arms without a second's hesitation. I believe kids can see right through anyone who's fake, so I reckoned she couldn't be all bad. And she certainly could scull a beer.

About six weeks later Justin called me from Canada. Sarah was in hospital in Melbourne. She'd had a miscarriage. He'd be home in a few days, but could I please visit her and see that she was alright.

I know what you're thinking, but no. He got fixed after Annabelle was born. I said no more kids and that was that, so obviously she must have got herself knocked up by someone local or maybe a last fling in Bangkok before she left. I was too busy to go and visit her, but I'm not heartless. I called her on the mobile number Justin had given me.

It wasn't pretty. There had been complications. She wouldn't be back on her feet for a while. So when Justin came home a few days later, he went to fetch her from hospital and brought her into our home, brought the viper within our walls. She didn't look dangerous then, pale, eyes dark-ringed, walking gingerly with her shoulders hunched. She had the air of a terribly wounded creature and her huge eyes were full of shadows.

Within a few days, Justin's cooking and the bed-rest started taking effect. Justin rented a truck and collected her things from where she had been staying and she moved in. Just like that. It was never discussed when she would be leaving.

She made an amazing recovery. By the end of the week she was taking short walks to the beach. The kids spent every available moment with her and she never turned them away. Story-time, mealtimes, shower-times, raucous games, she was up for all of it, like a big, golden family dog, happiest when the kids are romping all over it.

At first it was great. She was helpful in the extreme and not bad company when Justin was away. She cooked divinely and the weight just piled on. Onto me, not her. Oh no, by this stage she was running for half an hour every morning. The lumpiness that she'd had when she came out of hospital was replaced with the same whippet waist and flat hips I'd seen that first afternoon in the *ao dai*. Her long, golden hair seemed to grow by the hour and her skin glowed.

I began to hate her. I don't do mornings well, but every morning she was there in the kitchen ahead of me, exercised, showered, make-up perfect, greeting me in my own kitchen with that cheery "Good morning" that morning people reserve for those who hate mornings. I know because Justin's a morning person too. Usually she'd bang down a cup of tea on the counter too, made just the way I like it and then smile at me as if to say "Now you've got no excuse – I've done it all for you" and there would be my kids, smiling at me over their half-empty breakfast bowls. Morning people too. Couldn't one of them be like me?

Then she'd breeze off to uni, to her important research, leaving me to my chores and the endless taxiing around that the kids' afternoon activities require. Sometimes she'd get in before me and when I arrived with the kids she'd have dinner on the table for them. Other times she'd get in late and the kids wouldn't want to go to bed until they'd seen her. In the beginning I left the outside light on for her. After a while I reckoned she could find her way in the dark.

There's a lot about Sarah that's animal-like. For one thing, she moves more quietly than a cat. She seemed to take a delight in materialising next to me and then suddenly speaking so I'd nearly shit myself. She scared Justin silly a few times too. Only the kids were never scared by her. It was like they were connected by invisible threads that they wound into each other, stronger by the day, leaving me on the outside. She would scoop them into her long arms and they would press themselves against her, a wriggling bundle of love.

I saw the way she and Justin moved around each other in the kitchen when they cooked together, smooth as dancers, exchanging little jokes and comments as they worked, and my heart turned inside me. They flowed in a way he and I never did. In fact we never cook together. I hate cooking. I believe a woman should avoid learning to cook or type. Sarah does both.

I iron. My laundry is magnificent. Sarah only irons when she needs something. When I started telling her how long it takes, that I iron the children's sheets, she snorted and told me to get a life.

"Why don't you hire someone to do that for you? It's maids' work! You're paying someone to take care of your kids. What's so important about the sheets that you can't get someone to do that? Rather spend time with your kids"

By the time she left, I hated her more thoroughly than I have ever hated a human being. If Justin hadn't taken her part, she would have been gone a lot sooner. I was too afraid to threaten him with leaving myself, just in case he told me I could go. During the last two months I did everything I could to cut her out of our lives. I managed not to speak to her apart from saying good morning in front of the children, but only if she said it first. I tried to keep her away from them, hard when you're living in the same house. I didn't want the kids to be traumatised by the sudden removal of someone they'd got used to seeing around. I tried to ease them out of it. It didn't work.

They would sneak into her room before I got up and I'd hear them all giggling together. I think she let them jump on the bed and she had a whole box of "kid-magnets" like novelty toys, multi-coloured hair-paints and story books that they were only allowed to read with her.

On the spring afternoon she left, the three of them clung to each other in the drive, sobbing. Ok, maybe left isn't the right word. I evicted her. I did it while Justin was out of town and spun him a bullshit story about her driving drunk with the kids. I had to do it. My life was being stolen by the Pied Piper!

Sarah's golden shoulders shook silently and my children wailed into her skinny chest, their small heads hidden behind her curtain of hair. And I was shut out. She didn't try to make it easier for me by telling them bright stories about a happier future to fulfil elsewhere. When they begged her not to go she simply sobbed. She was going to let me be the bad guy.

Finally I couldn't take it anymore and dragged them off her, screaming. Sarah didn't say a word to me. Just put her rock-star sunglasses over her swollen eyes and squeezed into her little car. Amazing. Everything she owned fitted in there with her. I'd need a fleet of furniture trucks if we ever moved from here.

That night I had to bribe the kids with Maccas and chocolate and when Justin came home a few days later, he wouldn't even talk to me. Every night for the rest of his home leave he took his pillow and went to sleep in the spare room. I imagined him there, trying to smell the lingering scent of Sarah's perfume, while I lay in our bed alone, staring into the dark. He played with the kids and threw himself into his handyman chores, but he didn't smile and there were deep grooves down the sides of his mouth.

He eventually came back to my bed in the early summer and once or twice we made love again like we used to, but mostly we just shared sleeping space.

At least that was one good thing about the kids getting up so early this morning. I avoided the "Merry Christmas, darling" shag. So contrived. Yuck. To think that's going on in every house on the block, in the neighbourhood, in the country, just because it's Christmas.

Justin breezes into the lounge-room, fresh from the shower. He has on the shirt I picked out for him at the Myer sale, the one with all the greens, blues and mauves in it. He looks good. He's been taking better care of himself lately. He looks particularly happy this morning, despite not getting his Christmas shag. Tonight I'll just tell him I'm worn out.

"Hey kids!" he announces with that slight yip in his voice that he gets when he's really enthused about something. The old Justin. "Guess who I just spoke to?"

"Who? Who?" they want to know, their fight forgotten for the moment.

"Aunty Sarah!"

"Aunty Sarah! Aunty Sarah!" they trill, bouncing maniacally at his feet. "Is she coming to see us? Has she got presents for us?"

He looks at me briefly to gauge my reaction and then looks back at the kids whose eyes haven't left his face. After all he's their hero. I've set him up to be. Then he looks directly at me while still using his speaking-to-the-kids voice. There's something hard and new in his eyes.

"Yes, Aunty Sarah's car's not working and she's on her own for Christmas, so I'm going to fetch her and bring her back here for lunch."

I slam the knife I have been holding into on the kitchen bench and feel the tip nick my wrist as it spins across the surface. I feel my face start to crumple and I mouth silently "You bastard!"

For a moment he looks guilty and then his face hardens again.

"Can we come too? Oh please, Daddy?"

"No. Nana and Granddad have come a long way to see you. You stay here and play with them and I'll bring Aunty Sarah back in time for lunch. You'll see Aunty Sarah soon enough"

# Stuck Between the Pages

By Madelyne Mooney

Rittens Avenue was a deserted street. Rubbish blew from house to house and most homes were up for sale. Lucy shut the door of her mum's battered up car and dragged her feet up the front path of number 4 Rittens Avenue. The roses alongside the concrete were dead and the lawn didn't look like it had been mown for months.

"Mum what are we doing here?" Lucy asked a look of disgust painted across her face.

"This is our new home!" Tracy replied forcing a smile.

Her blonde hair was sleek and straight and her blue eyes glistened as she stared into the sun. She was rather plump. She had love handles that stuck out at the side of her tanned body, and a little round stomach.

Lucy was quite the opposite. She was skinny, pale and had bright curly, strawberry, red hair. Her green eyes looked deep into her mothers as she felt disappointed once again.

Tracy sighed as she opened the splintered door at the front of the old shattered house. She knew that moving around to old, cheap houses affected her daughter but she had been running low on money. She couldn't afford the last houses, therefore being forced to move out.

"It's cold in here," Lucy whinged holding her jacket tightly.

The walls were a vomit green and cracking around the window sills. The tiles didn't fit the floor and there were stains everywhere.

"Well, go find your room and I'll get some tea sorted." Tracy said

"Ok Mum." Lucy sighed.

She walked up the hallway peering through the doors into the small rooms that lay in front of her. They all looked the same. The walls looked as though they were once white, but where now stained and dirty. The carpet had been ripped off the floor in some places and the view was a dull, grey concrete wall. Not to mention the rat droppings in the corner of the room.

"Disgusting!" Lucy muttered.

She looked around searching for something a bit more appealing. Her gaze was caught on the big, dark, wooden door standing high at the very end of the hallway. She opened it with a creak.

It was a dark, gloomy room. A staircase was placed in the corner followed by a trapdoor in the roof. Lucy had just found her new room.

Lucy was unwrapping the fragile items and placing them on the box sitting next to her bed. She couldn't help but think what secret things may await her in the attic. She felt mesmerized and her curiosity grew as she stared at the staircase leading up to the attic.

"Lucy time for bed"

"Yes Mum" Lucy chanted

She waited for her Mum to walk out of the room and then tip toed up the dusty staircase. Every step she took the floor below her creaked louder. She came to the trapdoor and paused. Should I go through? She thought. Her thoughts soon disappeared after entering the attic. She pulled her body up and placed her bum on the cold squeaky floor.

It was dark, very dark. Lucy sneezed as she discovered the dust that surrounded the room. She walked slowly around the room trying hard not to bump into anything.

"Owwwww!" Lucy screamed tripping over something hard.

She bent down and picked up a book. It was dusty and Lucy couldn't read the title due to the dark. She walked slowly backwards hitting her head on what must have been a light switch hanging from the spider infested roof.

"Now I find you!" She cursed.

Lucy tripped down the stairs and fell onto her bed. She tucked the book under her pillow and snuggled into the blankets.

At about 2:00am a light flickered on and Lucy sat up heaving the book out from under her pillow. The title was bold and read "Stuck between the pages". Lucy thought for a moment and then opened the book using all her strength. Her eyes scanned the thick pages and she read the first sentence out loud.

Shane felt like he was stuck in the middle of a book.

Lucy smiled. It was then she realised that she was extremely tired. She yawned placing the book back under her fluffy pillow and tucking herself into the cold sheets.

Lucy's eyes flickered open as she awoke into a world that was not her own. The trees were upside down and the flowers had colourful stems and green petals. "How strange" Lucy said stumbling to her feet.

A dark shadow had appeared on the ground. Lucy stared at it as it expanded larger and larger. Pretty soon the shadow had completely covered her and she was surrounded by darkness. A book that read 'Stuck between the Pages' had fallen from the sky! It was hovering just above her and it was massive! It had grown since she had last touched it.

She walked around the book studying its crumpled pages and hard cover.

She heard a little cough, turning around to face a small creature. Its big fat lips opened and its high pitched voice was unleashed.

"Welcome to Kalome."

"Hi I'm Lucy" she held out her hand.

The creature stared at her "Notmon. My name is Notmon."

Notmon reminded Lucy of a jockey. His long face made him look extremely sad and his high pitched voice sounded like he had just taken in a balloon full of helium.

"Um, where am I?" Lucy asked.

"Kalome" Notmon repeated sounding quite annoyed.

"Right" Lucy paused and stared back up at the book. "I was wondering how to get home." She turned around to face Notmon. "Notmon" She called finding no one. He had disappeared as fast as he had come.

Lucy sighed. She wiped the dirt from her old ripped jacket and walked past the trees coming to rather unusual house. Its triangular windows were framed with sticky green stuff. Its roof looked like a bubble about to burst and a spiral staircase led up to the diamond shaped door. Lucy bit her lip and skipped up the blue path. Bits of the green sticky stuff were crawling out of the cracks like worms. She jumped up the stairs two at a time and came to the door. She was just about to knock when the door flew open and out came an extremely tall person hovering just above the ground.

"Fine I-I-I'll do it my-myself" The hovering person stuttered as it turned to face Lucy pushing her out of the way.

"You won't be able to!" A small but loud creature stumbled out waving a newspaper and chasing after the hovering thing. He turned and glared at Lucy. "And who might you be?" He asked.

"I'm Lucy. I don't know where I am. Can you help me?"

"Lucy." The creature paused for a short moment "Well I'm very sorry but I cannot help you due to some problems of my own." Lucy looked shocked. The creature was not very polite in fact he was quite rude.

"What's your name?" Lucy asked.

"Boston"

"Well, if I help you, can you help me?"

"Listen, little girl I know you just want to play but I have some very important business to attend to." The short man gritted his teeth and clenched his fists. Lucy opened her mouth to say something when a thought hit her like a tidal wave. She started to cry. Her hot tears fell to the ground.

"I don't mean to upset you. I just... I need to do something very important that affects a lot of people."

The creature reached up to put his hand on Lucy's shoulder, which he found very hard to do due to his height.

"Okay" Lucy sobbed grinning behind her clasped hands. Her plan had worked. "Maybe I can help you in some way" Lucy said.

"I know you just want to help. But I'm not sure there's anything you can do." "Well at least tell me what's wrong!" Lucy muttered

"It's complicated"

"I'm ready for anything." Lucy said

"Well you see this is not a normal place."

"So I see. What is that green stuff on the windows and path?"

"That is called green stuck. It is glue that sticks the windows and doors, even the roof onto the house. I mean why bother with all that hammering in nails right!" "Yeah I suppose"

"Anyway this place is called Kalome and we live in a book. The book you must have found! Anyway the main character in the book was captured by the Creepy Crawler. The Creepy Crawler has locked him in jail, therefore leaving the story at a stand still. The thing is the book can't stand an unhappy ending. It has opened for anyone who reads it!"

"And I read it. So how do I get back?"

"Well you have to save the good guy."

"How hard can that be?"

"Harder than you think!"

"You see Shane the good guy was the strongest person in Kalome until the Creepy Crawler defeated him!"

"I see. So as long as Shane is in the Creepy Crawlers jail I am the main character. "

"Yes you must have replaced him. You're picking this up rather fast."

"Yeah well anyway what were you and the..." Lucy paused "the hovering guy arguing about?"

"Crane oh. Well you see, when you read the book last night we knew you would be here today. Crane doesn't think that you will be able to do it. Crane he used to live where you live and we couldn't free the main character because he was killed so Crane was stuck in the book forever. Which may I say is not that bad?" "You're saying that if I don't save Shane I am stuck here forever!"

"Well when you say it like that it sounds really bad"

"It is really bad!"

"Look, I'm sorry, but I'm sure you'll fit in just fine"

"What about my Mum?"

"Well she can always see you in the book"

"This is not funny. I may never see my Mum again!"

Lucy pulled herself off the cracking stairs and stamped away. A sheet of paper flew in her face. She ripped it off and was just about to throw it away when something on the paper caught her eye. It read...

**Wanted Creepy Crawler.**

**Has committed many crimes including the  
capture of Shane or the 'Good Guy'.**

**Reward \$200 000!**

Lucy thought hard for a moment. What if I was to catch The Creepy Crawler? Her thoughts were interrupted by a light tap on her left shoulder. She spun around to face Boston.

"I'm gonna catch this Creepy Crawler guy!" Lucy said excitedly.

"No you're not!" replied Boston. "The Creepy Crawler is way too dangerous. There is no way that I am letting you get captured as well."

"I won't! I'm stronger than you think. Now I have to go."

"Wait. I'm coming with you."

"What?"

"Well you need someone to help you. Besides I have an idea."

The wind picked up quickly that afternoon. Boston led Lucy to the main part of Kalome. She followed him to an archway that smelt of vanilla and strawberries and was covered with red and white flowers. Lucy walked under the archway

coming out at a small garden. Two bench seats were placed in the garden and each one had two people sitting on them.

"Hey Boston, so what are we doing here?" a blonde girl said glaring at Lucy "Who's she?"

"Milly, Sarah, Bob and George I'd like you to meet Lucy. She came here last night." The group looked confused. "You know the one I was talking about last week" Boston whispered.

"Oh" Everyone smiled at Lucy and gestured her to sit down.

"No, everyone stand up I need you to come with me." Boston said

There was a few sighs a groans but the group eventually got up and followed Boston out of the archway. They walked for a while passing some rather unusual sculptures of animals and talking about how they would defeat the Creepy Crawler.

"Shhhhh!" Milly whispered her blonde hair shining in the rays of the hot sun. "Look there's the jail. I can see Shane."

George crept up beside Milly. "I see him to" He said.

Sarah's soft hands touched Lucy's shoulders as she poked her head around the corner trying to get a glimpse of Shane.

"Now we all know what we have to do?" Boston asked.

"Yes" they all replied like a group of kids answering the teacher at school. "Okay let's spread out" Milly said taking over the group.

They all ran in different directions. Lucy hid behind a bush with Boston, Milly and Bob stood behind a tall oak tree and Sarah and George ran closest to the jail ducking down behind a short concrete wall. Sarah turned around giving Boston thumbs up. Boston ran towards Sarah, Lucy trailing not far behind.

"I reckon we should each go around one side of the jail" Milly said coming up to Boston and the small group.

"What if we're seen?" Lucy asked

"Then we have a chance of all ending up in jail" Milly explained

"Right better not do that then" Lucy replied

Milly rolled her eyes and ran around the corner "I'm going to take watch" She said before taking off.

Lucy bit her lip and quickly darted after her. "How are we going to defeat the Creepy Crawler?" She asked nervously

"Well I was thinking to use you as bait." Lucy's jaw dropped and she gulped down the lump in her throat. "I'm kidding" Milly laughed. "After we get into position we use signs to communicate and play it by ear"

"That's the plan" Lucy frowned.

"Yep. We've already been over this. Now you stay here I'm going besides the building" and with that Milly was gone.

Lucy waited for a while until she heard a loud pitched voice. "Lucy back me up" Boston was whispering from the tree 5 metres away. He pointed at a man who was hunched over biting his long black fingernails. "That's the Creepy Crawler" He hissed.

Lucy took a deep breath and tip toed after Boston. He took out what looked like a gun. Lucy gasped covering her mouth so the Creepy Crawler would not hear her. She didn't think that they were going to kill the Creepy Crawler just catch him.

Boston rolled out from behind the tree and pulled the trigger twice. Two loud shots echoed around the little town of Kalome.

"No!!" Lucy cried

The Creepy Crawler spun around and quickly dodged the two shots that were fired at him.

"Lucy" Milly screamed "What were you thinking!"

"You were fir-firing at him! thought"

"It's water!" Sarah explained "It's the only thing that can defeat the Creepy Crawler. "

"But I thought"

"You thought wrong!" Milly rolled her dark brown eyes and charged towards the creepy Crawler, his mouldy green tongue licking his lips and his hands clasping together.

The Creepy Crawler's reflects were fast! He grabbed Milly and spun her into the brick wall. She hit it hard falling to the ground with a thud. Boston sprinted towards Milly and Sarah went for the monster. Lucy ran behind the trees until she came to the water gun lying on the ground. She picked it up and clasped her fingers around it. She took a deep breath and ran out from behind the large purple tree. The Creepy Crawler must have heard her because he turned to face her, his devilish eyes glaring at her evilly.

"Lucy pass"

George was standing high on top of the jails roof his hands waving around like crazy .

Lucy threw the gun high into the air towards George. Everything went into slow motion as he caught it and fired one single shot at the Creepy Crawler. George tumbled off the roof landing on the Creepy Crawler. Not that he needed to. The Creepy Crawler had turned to ice, solid and hard as a rock.

Lucy laughed. She couldn't help herself. Milly jumped up from the ground, rubbing her head and laughed too. Before Lucy knew it everyone was laughing. They had just caught the Creepy Crawler! Victory was there's.

A few hours later Boston walked up to Lucy with Shane.

"Hey," he said "I want you to have this. We all do. We couldn't have done it without you." Milly chucked a large brown sack to Lucy.

She dropped it and money spilled out everywhere.

"There's exactly \$200 000 in there" Sarah smiled

"I can't" Lucy stammered.

"It's for helping me to escape the Creepy Crawler" Shane said

"Besides we know that you need it more than us" George was starting to pick up the money in handfuls.

Lucy grinned. "I'll never forget any of you and what you have done for me" she complimented and was pushed under the book and sucked back into her own world.

Lucy's eyes opened as she heard her Mother walking into the room. Was it all a dream?

"Lucy guess what?" Her Mum screamed "I just won \$200 000 on a tats lotto ticket. "

Lucy jumped up excitedly and wrapped her arms around her Mum. Then they both got up and danced around the room.

Lucy thought of Kalome where Boston and her new friends were. Was it all a dream? Lucy wasn't sure. She wasn't even sure if she would ever see them again. But if it had been a dream it was the best dream she had ever had!