

AGE 13-17 WINNING ENTRY

A SAFER PLACE

BY KEIRA L. AGE 14



The music was so loud Emmie could feel every beat pulsing within her bones. Her room was dark, but neon lights flashed obnoxiously through the crack under the door, making her head ache. It was 9am on a school day and her sister's party was still going strong. Emmie stared at her screen in dismay. She'd already missed four calls this week, and if she skipped another she'd be in big trouble with the school. However if she took the call, she'd be scolded for the distracting lights. And if she ever had to unmute herself...Emmie shuddered at the thought. With one last rueful glance at the class attendance, she closed her laptop and slipped out the door.

Emmie blew a little puff of air out of her mouth and watched as the vapour drifted away on the chilly breeze. It was unusual for it to be so cold in Australia, but winter had set in early and wasn't showing any signs of going away. She was sitting on a park bench, sketching people as they went about their lives. Currently, Emmie's artistic focus was directed on a familiar figure. This girl came to the park so often that Emmie had an entire section of her sketchbook dedicated to her. The girl never failed to intrigue. Maybe a couple of years older than Emmie, about 14 or 15, she dressed like a movie character; thick eyeliner, dark clothes and plenty of heavy jewellery. She always wore a black mask over her mouth, but that wasn't unusual due to the Covid situation the world was currently in. The girl didn't do much. She just sat there, lost in thought, until the light faded and the world became dark and unfriendly. Except today...

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"I knew it."

Emmie jumped, the sketchbook flying out of her hands and landing on the wet grass next to the mystery girl's boots. Emmie had been so absorbed in the art that she hadn't heard her coming. The girl quickly picked it up, her face unreadable without the lower half visible. Emmie prayed she wouldn't turn the page and see the many drawings of herself. Explaining that would be awkward, to say the least. "You aren't a bad artist." The girl slid onto the bench seat next to Emmie, holding the sketchbook out for her to take. Emmie smiled nervously, placing it in her lap. "Thanks. "Although, you could've at least tried to get my good side. I'm not even smiling." She pointed at the masked drawing. Her voice was deadpan, and Emmie panicked, unable to read the girl's intention. Then Emmie saw her brown eyes twinkle with amusement, and she felt a stab of relief. "I'm guessing you don't mind then? You know, me drawing you and all. Some people would think that's creepy." The girl shrugged. "No. It's a way to pass the time. Probably healthier than what I do, but then again, we aren't so different, are we?" Emmie frowned, very confused now. "What do you mean?"

The girl laughed, but there was little amusement in the sound. "I don't know if you've noticed, but kids don't tend to spend every day alone at a park. Not unless it's better than the alternative." Emmie dropped her gaze. "So you're avoiding home too?" The girl tugged down her mask, revealing ugly bruises around her mouth. Emmie gasped, and the girl nodded, pulling it back up. They sat in silence for a couple of seconds, shivering against the cold.

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I'm Nyx."

"Emmie."

And thus, a fateful friendship begun.

It quickly became established that there were many children like Emmie and Nyx in the area. The girls gathered them all, creating a pack of sorts. Together, they unofficially claimed an abandoned house and 'borrowed' Wi-Fi from their neighbour. In this new clubhouse, they made a solemn vow. "For children whose families have failed them, we will always be there." So in the end, a small group of children visited the building every day of online school. They set up their laptops and felt comfortable to learn, no longer scared about what might be seen or heard in the background. It was paradise, and their parents never even knew.

The End



THE LAST REMINISCENCE

BY JESSICA A. AGE 14



It's been an eternity. We're starting to forget the things we should remember. All that's left are dying memories. Streets lie barren, shops stand dark and dismal, with doors that haven't opened in years. No more laughter or chatter, just the occasional buzz of delivery drones. Parks are deserted, swings creaking as the wind blows almost whistling a sad tune. Waiting for children to come play once more. Everyone was waiting. We have been for the past ten years. We're helpless, fighting something that can't be killed.

"A once in a century pandemic." Sounds daunting – more like catastrophic. We've always had the power, not anymore. Deaths spiraled uncontrollably as the virus spread faster than January's bushfires. The world appeared to be reaching the end of its time, taking humanity down with it and the virus as its last reminiscence. I struggle to picture life before it surged through countries, imprisoning us and taking our freedom.

In the beginning sports and gatherings were forbidden by the government. Cafés and restaurants were forced to close. Workers went home locking up until duty called again. Strict laws were designed to protect the people. Alas it made humanity panic even more. Everything seemed to start to wither and eventually die. The world changed that week, never to be the same again. It got worse. So much worse. Schools became online. I remember calculating the days I would be thrust into my home. Seventeen weeks. I stared across the room feeling numb, cold, emotionless. This was only the start...



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Early June the death toll reached a surprising standstill. Everyone waited anxiously. Imagine if it was over, we could leave all this behind us. Leave it to the history books. June 12th 2020, we went back to school. Cafes reopened, sport started once more, normality seemed to be returning. After many months of chaos, we could see a light, a future. Plans of travel, parties and reopenings began to unfold. People were excited, fresh, eager... The streets filled with life and colour again. Chatter amongst our small country town was now lighthearted. However of course, we were not the same as we were before. There were still many rules, rules that would stay for years, possibly decades, maybe forever.

"With great frustration the Australian government, two weeks after they rushed us back to what they thought would benefit the country, announced Covid 2.0 had arrived. Yes, the second wave...No one could believe it, no one wanted to. The numbers increased rapidly, more than we'd ever seen. By the day the cases grew in hundreds. Back then I thought of the virus as a monster created as a warning. Slowing humanity in its tracks. Helping earth breath again to survive a little longer. The virus as it's first fight. Yet now, ten years later, I believe it's trying to destroy us.

I peered out my window gazing at my lonely street. Ten years. I breathed in shakily. That long? Realization of how much of my life had been stolen from me raced through my mind. I had no life outside of my home now. Maybe I never would. The pandemic had ruined my future along with the rest of my generation.



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Memories of long ago came flooding through. Dreams I had never accomplished appeared before my eyes in a clouded vision. As I slowly stood up; a new energy bubbled inside me. An energy from when I was a child, the energy that shot through my veins and into my stomach before something exciting happened. Butterflies. I knew what they meant. I knew what they were telling me to do. They wanted me to go outside.

“My feet tingled in excitement as I ventured down each step. I stopped at the door. I was pulled in two directions. To live or not. I chose to live, opened the door and ran. My voice echoed down the dying streets. A surge of power ran through me as the fresh air and summer breeze hit my skin. The first contact I’d had with the outside world in so so long. I trembled with happiness, excitement, sadness and every emotion I had, not knowing which one was right in the moment. The sunlight soaked my skin once again and I breathed in with pleasure. I desperately wanted what the virus had stolen from me. I wanted everything back where it belonged. Where things should’ve been. Could we still have a future? Or has the virus already won?”

The End



OUR BACTERIAL WAR

BY SARA S. AGE 13



Doctors and nurses - our soldiers,
Sanitizer and soap - our weapons,
And the enemy... a virus.

This Battle has consumed our lives,
We defeated the enemy once but they
came back stronger,
Panic and fear are creating a storm,
decreasing our chances,

The people decide who comes out
victorious
They are the jury,
They decide whether the virus takes
over or the life we once knew returns,

The battlegrounds are microscopic but
the effects are macroscopic,
Our lungs are the target taking us out
at the source,
We must do the same.

Masks and gloves - our defence,
Social distancing - our strategy,
But is it enough?
How long will it take to vanquish this
virus?

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OUR BACTERIAL WAR

BY SARA S. AGE 13



Their soldiers have infiltrated our
bases so many times,
Taking out our sides and infecting our fighters,
We make them leave but they find a way to get back in.

Our spies say that we are defeating
them, but they come back and take down our numbers,

Spreading all over the globe, taking
many lives with them.

They are taking Grandmothers, Grandfathers,
Brothers and sisters, Daughters and
Sons, Mothers and fathers.

They are taking away our loved ones.

But we fought back,
Hard but not hard enough,
But it is not over,

Because we will not let our losses
become our defeat,
Because we are going to win this war so
that their sacrifice will not go to waste,
So, we will fight back harder than
ever, for those we have lost.

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OUR BACTERIAL WAR
BY SARA S. AGE 13



We will fight 'til our enemy is conquered,
Because we are all fighting for the
future, hopefully
Some people think this is a game,
But are the hundreds of thousands of
innocent lives taken just a rumour?
Is this all just a terrible
dream?

The protocols are becoming stricter,
Freedom seems like a hallucination,
How long will this microscopic war
continue infecting our lives?

This time will go down in history, not
as a victory, nor a defeat,
For me, I will think of it as a war,
A worldwide war, not between each other
but an unknown enemy,
A Bacterial War.

The End

JASIAH COHEN'S PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE
BY TARILYN B. AGE 14



January 7th

I am so thrilled. I can't even describe it. I finally get to go overseas for the year as an exchange student. You don't even know how hard I have worked for this taking extra shifts whilst maintaining top grades. The plane takes off tomorrow at 11:35pm and with it ME!!! I have everything packed. I have unpacked and packed countless times.

March 9th

My feet are drained of energy. Today was hard work. 11am-10pm I had to work today. Lunch time was alright but soon as dinner time came, jeez it was busier than a shopping center on Christmas eve. There were people in every corner of the pub. It was rambunctious, tv's playing, kid wailing and rowdy men enunciating to each other whilst demanding orders at me, which I didn't like. "Hey son, Canadian club here thanks." "Arhh I'll take the burger and chips buddy." Despite all that, one subject everyone was bickering about was a virus. Coronavirus or something like that. People were saying that it started in china with a rat or was it a bat I can't remember. Apparently, it is contagious to. I bet it will just be a phase. I think they're just making up rumours and that is childish.

March 17th

Man, this week was extreme. The boys (Luke, Tom, Oliver and Noah) and I went out to Lake Pit, Lake Aloutte and Lake Stave. We decided to take the week after exams off because of all the hard work we had put in to studying, eating and exercising to keep our minds sharp. We decided that on this trip we would shut off all technology cause the

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JASIAH COHEN'S PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE
BY TARILYN B. AGE 14



point was to escape. We took Oliver's lavish, sparkling, white pick-up truck. Holy cow it was nice. Threw our hockey gear and clothes in the back and off we went. But sadly, we are heading back to reality tomorrow.

March 18th

The trouble came when we came back home. We didn't even have to get near home to realize. As we drove in to the outskirts of Port Coquitlam it was a ghost town, very few people on the streets, shops closed everywhere, it was very eerie. One by one Oliver dropped us off first Tom, Noah, Luke and then me. I said cya to Oliver then I walked inside. WOW I have never had a hug tighter from my second mum (host) in the history of ever, it made me feel at home. After she had calmed down, we sat on the couch and she explained everything that had gone on in the past week. It was so hard to believe but then again, we just witnessed it when we drove in to the city. She said that "borders were being closed, flights cancelled and that I should go home while I could." That's when my heart dropped, I didn't want to go home I had worked so hard to be here why would I want to go. Our conversation ended in a dispute in which I got told just to think about it. I hate this. I shouldn't have to go.

March 22nd

The last couple of days were jam packed I was trying to do a year's worth of stuff in 3 days. It was a tiresome 3 days. It was hard and heartbreaking at the same time even though I had only spent a couple of months they were people I would remember forever. This is not goodbye. Also, not for ever because I'm coming back no matter how long it takes.

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JASIAH COHEN'S PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE
BY TARILYN B. AGE 14



March 23rd

Jeez, it was chaotic at the airport. There were people yelling at us, shoving us in different directions, it was confusing but in the end we all ended up on a bus that escorted us to a hotel. It was a short drive. They shoved us off the bus which infuriated me, there's no need to shove. After we got our luggage off the bus there was a hotel waiting for us to enter had an authority set up which included police, the army and lots of people in suits. They walked us into the lobby then they split us put into groups depending on what floor we would be staying in. Waiting in our rooms was a list telling us everything we needed to know. Now all we have to do is wait 14 days. This should be good, not going to frustrate me at all.

The End



MY WORLD IS A SONG
BY KESHAYA F. AGE 13



The World is like a song with every note from high to low, every note is a movement or an emotion that fills up are hearts. As time goes by that song will change like how people change. The notes can get jumbled up and make the wrong song or it can build up to a great song. These are feelings happy to sad. The nature, flora and fauna make this world peaceful like a harmony. Each element makes a different sound like an instrument in an orchestra. The song you here will never stay the same as the wind, water, earth and fire destroys this world. The wind and water team up, as they can make a chaos, as hurricanes blow into country's destroying homes and loved ones. Fires crackles as they burn down the nature, flora and fauna who make the harmony. Earthquakes destroy homes and building the ones we live and work in. Still the song continues.

The World as changed again and again still it has not stopped. When you sleep the world is changing, when you wake up, every hour, every minute to every second the world will keep changing. The rats scurry in the darkness as the birds fly in the open air, there tiny movements are added to this song a simple beat that changes the whole song. People die as the disease infects them more, lumps filled with puss are all over there body, the Black Death comes to the world, changing the song to a quiet rhythm. The song continues as people scream as the pain starts to come, soon they are quiet and the orchestra losses an instrument one by one. Still the song continues as the disease sweeps in, and just like that it is gone in a flash.



MY WORLD IS A SONG
BY KESHAYA F. AGE 13



The gun fires, it's a blood bath, sirens ringing, the melody changes once again, as the soldier's march into the distance. The world is at war, the tune of the sirens will ring in your ear, you will hear the cries of children, and people lining up to get their ration of food and the red flower that grew on the fields, where the blood bath started and ended. The war is like a guitar, once you play your guitar for a long time the strings snap off, the sound of the guitar changes. War is like that broken string, when there is peace in the world the world will change. The song changes, while the people you once lived with change as well. Bombs drop the rhythm changes the scream of war is a whisper to your ear. These movements change, but the song is still not complete. The world is changing, just when you thought that song would end, and the beautiful sound of birds would come to your ear. but still this song continues, deafening your ear.

Wildlife once surrounded you, but now burning trees and bush surrounds you, the smell of smoke makes you sick, the sound is a ringing in your ear. Smoke fills the air and the sound of trees swaying in the wind is no more, the orchestra is still playing that song, even if instruments are disappearing. The animals in the trees are running making the beat change, the thud of their feet is load in your ears. People trying to get the fire out with water. A gush of water surrounds the fire and the rhythm changes, the water, feet stomping on the ground and the scream of nature. Plants burning, the crackle of fire, all is destroyed. Still the song continues even from the scream of nature. Now louder than ever, the song is like a roller-coaster in my head.

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**MY WORLD IS A SONG
BY KESHAYA F. AGE 13**



The virus has spread, masks are to be worn. Coughing and sneezing, bugs all in the air. The sound is everywhere, people in isolation not being able to go anywhere. It may seem quiet, but nature has awakened as more animals come out, less pollution, but still the same amount of noise. If you listen to what is around you, you will understand what I mean, the world is a song playing every day, it has every step a song is made up of. Loud or quiet it is a song. No-one can stop this song it will go on. This song will keep changing, like how people's lives change, different beats, rhythms, melody's and the harmony. This is all because my world is changing.

The End