

**MY BROTHER JACK
AWARDS 2021**

**SHORT STORIES AND
POETRY**

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Primary Short Story

Judge's Report – Eliza Henry-Jones

Firstly, thank you to everyone who submitted stories – it's such an enormous privilege to be able to read them. Once again, I was deeply impressed by the standard of stories and agonised over my selection.

There were 63 entries in this section. Overwhelmingly, the stories were vivid and incredibly imaginative. There were stories set in fantasy worlds and dystopias with mechanical insects; stories that dealt with death and grief; stories about penguins and kings and fires and time travel – and stories about super hero guinea pigs.

I read all of the stories through twice. The first read through was to see if I enjoyed it; the second read through was with things in mind like originality, plot and voice. Many of the stories started off strongly, only to trail off or rush the ending. I struggled so much to pick a winner that, once again, I brought my teacher-librarian mother out of retirement to read the shortlist and help me pick.

Thank you again to all of the wonderful writers out there who trusted me with your stories. For those of you who have placed – congratulations! For those of you who might be feeling a bit disappointed – I've been in your shoes. I hope every single one of you keeps writing, because every single story I read had potential.

First Place

Secret Defenders of the Universe vs Agent Soggy Bread by James Lipchin

Funny, fast paced and with great use of an unreliable narrator, 'Secret Defenders of the Universe vs Agent Soggy Bread' is about heroes trying to prevent the destruction of everyone and everything, only for one of the hero's mums to keep popping up in the backyard, ruining the fun! I love how the writer managed both threads of this story without compromising on the overall shape or the build-up of tension.

Highly Commended

Athletics Day by Samuel Hicks

This rhyming story portrays a day in the life of a student attending an athletics day by a young writer who has a very strong command of language. I loved the pacing and message of this story.

Forever Hero by Annie Tao

This story about a tragic house fire delves into the ideas of heroism and sacrifice. It was very moving and I was struck by the maturity of the writer.

Doorway to Another Day by Henry Raju King

A very interesting story from a writer with a vivid imagination! 'Doorway to Another Day' explores time travel – with our main character meeting his adult self and making rethinking a decision he'd made.

Primary Short Story – *First Prize*

Secrets Defenders of the Universe vs Agent Soggy Bread

by James Lipchin

Agent Spy reporting for duty. I have gathered my trusty secret defenders of the universe. Everything is at stake. If we don't defeat the evil Agent Soggy Bread, everything and everyone will be destroyed.

"Agent Spy, I'm scared," whispered Agent Henry.

"There's no need to be scared Agent Henry. We don't need to fear anything as long as we are fighting together. "We all look at each other. We have fought a hundred battles across a hundred planets. But none as terrifying as this. Agent Henry is shivering with fear. Usually, he is the bravest one out of us. Not this time. Agent Michael seems focused. He isn't saying a word, just looking at his weapon in his hand. Agent Johnny, my best friend, always calms my nerves. He saved my life once, during a fierce battle against Agent Soggy Bread's minions. I will never forget that.

"It's ok, Agent Spy. If we don't come out of this alive, I'm glad that I got to fight alongside you." whispered agent Johnny. Everyone smiled at each other.

"James, dinner is ready." The battlefield was calling my old name... James... "Dinner is getting too cold to bring to your friends!"

"Agent Spy, who is that?" questions Agent Michael.

"It has nothing to do with me, promise. It's just the wind of this wasteland." I reply. "James! Your dinner is getting really cold!"

"Who's James!" My friends are getting suspicious. My position as the legendary Agent Spy, leader of the Defenders of the Universe, is in question. They all whisper confused. I have to make a plan because mum is coming.

"Here are some earplugs," I say confidently.

"What do we need these for?" exclaims agent Henry.

"I have seen agent Soggy Bread use a huge move which is very loud and will take you out."

“James, you all must come eat your dinner or else it will go cold” mum exclaims. Luckily my friends can't hear because they have ear plugs in. My identity is still a secret.

The earplugs were working. Agent Soggy Bread could no longer use his move to knock us off the battlefield. “Your evil tactics won't work agent Soggy Bread!” I yell. We charge into battle.

James's mum smiles as she sees four eight year olds shooting nerf guns at four more eight year olds. Her twin sons seemed to be leading each team. So cute. It was nerf bullet after nerf bullet. I get some good shots in. So does agent Michael with his disc shooter. But Agent Soggy Bread isn't finished. He still has one more evil tactic ready to use. From behind the bushes an evil Soggy Bread minion appears with an illegal water gun and attacks us all! We feel like we are melting.

“James, Oliver you're ruining your new clothes! You are all soaked. Inside now!”

“Dude your mom sucks,” says Michael.

“Yeah, sorry guys,” says Oliver [Soggy Bread]. “Let's play at your house tomorrow, Johnny.”

Primary Short Story – *Highly Commended*

Athletics Day

by Samuel Hicks

In this short story I'll walk through my day, starting at 7:40am where a nervous me once lay...

My Google Home wakes me on cue, at 7:50am my breakfast is due. I slip on my clothes and hop down the stairs, there's a warm and calm feeling all through the air. I make my lunch with all kinds of delights, like cupcakes and pears that are perfectly ripe. My dad cooks my toast with peanut butter galore- and a bit later he serves me some more. My mum heads to work and dad gives me a big hug, I then head to school feeling all nice and snug!

I arrive a bit late by a minute or two and sit on the floor with all of my crew. As the clock ticks my heart follows, steady in pace but all nervous and shallow. Next thing I know we're all on the bus and I sit next to Kevin who's a friend that I trust. We have a small chat and play a game of cards, with the athletics track within a few yards...

Cut to the chase, 100-metre race. All the year 5 boys are put in small heats; I end up with Jaden who's quick on his feet. The sound of the siren makes me suddenly shake and I make a small tumble sending me to last place. As if dunked in water, I snap back awake, I slither past Ethan like a small cunning snake. I used my speed and outrun the rest, but Jaden was too quick, and he did the best. I end up in second in a climactic way, but little did I know that wasn't my last ribbon that day...

800 meters followed and my heat was okay, Cooper the Trooper and Bailey the Brave. Phillip too but need we go on, he tried to block me, yet I still quickly won. With my heart in my smile, I take the first place, but little did I know that I wouldn't just crush this race...

We wait in the cold shivering and frowning and slowly by slowly my hopes begin drowning. The time finally comes, and we're put on the track, the sound of the siren lets out a crack. I use half of my speed to catch up with Bailey, his breaths are heavy, and I hatch a small scheme. I notice he's tired after a quarter of a lap, so I forcefully run harder to form a small trap. Seeing my speed, his pace increases whilst unknown to him his energy slowly decreases. My plan worked and he slowed down a tonne with not much energy to keep up his run. I crossed the finish line first for three laps whilst Albert conserved energy close to the back. With 200 metres to go my hopes were so high when Albert quickly catches my eye. He's running so fast, overtaking the rest when he's just behind me and a cramp forms in

my chest. He sprinted to the end and beats me by an inch, yet I am still happy for second place, I don't even flinch!

Primary Short Story– *Highly Commended*

Forever Hero

by Annie Tao

Good night, dear! I love you!” mum said to Albert while kissing passionately on his forehead. Albert lived happily in a loving family as sweet as honey. However, tonight changed his life forever, a new hero carved a new depth of bravery in his young, innocent heart. Forever hero!

The night was quiet and dark outside, inside the house only the light of the candle shivered to bring warmth and brightness. The candle blew out a warning, dangerous and full of fear. Suddenly, a cold breeze of wind slipped out of the small hole of the window. As fast as a wild horse freed from chains, the shivering candle roared out loud. The curtains near the candle caught on fire, in a blink of an eye, the evil fire spreaded across the room with a fearful sneer. Smoke surrounded the house, Albert’s family woke up and the fire alarm in the house shouted in warning.

“Nee nah!” The fire engine truck drove down the street at full speed. Dozens of firemen jumped out of the truck. Their young faces reflected with bravery in the horrific boiling fire. With no hesitation, they eagerly climbed up the half-broken house and fought with the fire selflessly. The fastest fireman who’s climbing up the house is Sherlock. Sherlock had been through many dangerous and fearful fire situations, and he faced all of them with his experienced skills and courageous fearless heart.

Alert and fast, he climbed into Albert’s bedroom, Albert and his mum stared at the fire with horror and panic. Albert’s mum hugged Albert tightly and refused for Sherlock to rescue him downstairs. “Trust me, I promise I will take care of him selflessly and return him to you safely.” said Sherlock with determination. Albert’s mum handed Sherlock his baby with eyes full of love and hope. “Thank you!” replied Albert’s mum, trembling.

Sherlock carefully tucked Albert inside one of his arms and started his dangerous journey climbing down the house. With determination, Sherlock climbed down calmly one step at a time, steadily. Suddenly, a part of the house burnt and became soft, Sherlock stepped on it and lost his balance, dropping FAST. However, the bold determination and bravery on Sherlock’s face didn’t disappear a bit, he could drop Albert and safely land. But with a kind and generous heart, he smiled and hugged Albert tightly. With a low BANG, Sherlock landed, he gently closed his eyes with a satisfied smile.

“Sherlock!” His teammates cried and ran towards. However, Sherlock already stopped breathing, he left his youth and dream, he returned to God, as a young hero. Albert was safe and warm, his young innocent face brightened by the fire. “Sherlock. Wake up! It’s not time for sleep.” Albert yelled childishly with a sudden panic. Albert’s mum walked towards, bent down, kissed the hero-Sherlock.

One week later, in the coffin of Sherlock. It written:

He Kept Faith

He Saved Lives

He Experienced Youth and Bravery

He will be Remembered

Forever Hero

Primary Short Story – *Highly Commended*

Doorway to Another Day

by Henry Raju King

It was early Friday evening, all you could hear was the gentle whisper of the wind. The quiet was soon disturbed by shouting coming from my family's red brick home.

My mother had told me I could only open one present, so I picked one wrapped in crumpled red parchment from my grandfather. Inside was a large coin with a clock on one side and the old church on the other. I slipped it into my pocket. We all clambered into the car and drove off. As we drove our parents told us where we were going.

“A new French restaurant for Marco's birthday” they said as they pointed at me. “La Porte Du Cel, the reviews are amazing, and it's been converted from the old church!”

When we arrived, the restaurant was packed, as we were shown to our table we saw steaming scallops, soufflés in every flavour and trays of large oysters. We sat down and ordered our food. Luca, my older brother had just taken his first bite when he started jerking and puffing out his cheeks. We all thought he was acting but suddenly a gush of vomit pored from his mouth. Waiters all came rushing out holding mops and other cleaning items. After some serious scrubbing and some serious cursing, my parents decided to just leave and post a negative review. I banged my hands on the table, “Just a negative review. I'm going to tell the chef his food's spoilt!” I yelled, then stormed off

As I pushed open the door of what sounded like a bustling kitchen the coin in my pocket grew heavy and started glowing. I walked through a black void, and suddenly I was back home in the red brick house, but it was very different. The walls looked more worn and everyone in the pictures looked much older. As I entered the kitchen I was shocked to see what looked like me but twenty years from now standing at the blender. We both freaked out but after much discussion we realised what might've happened and decided if I went through the door from the other side theoretically the effects would flip, sending me back to my time.

We embarked on our mission. "We'll use Luca's van" said future me. "My cars getting serviced. Luca probably won't mind." We hopped an old dusty burgundy van and set off on our journey. On the drive we talked about many things, but because he was future me he understood that I wanted the future to be a surprise. Then we heard a large bang and the van slowed to a halt. "Darn van. We'll have to go on foot!" barked future me.

We turned the last corner but all we saw was the burnt out remains of the La Porte Du Cel. The disappointment washed over me, but as we got closer we could see the Kitchen door, surrounded by rubble, oddly perfectly intact. We slowly walked up to the door, the coin glowing more brightly and getting hotter. We said our farewells and I stepped through the door.

Then poof I was back in my own time just about to push the door open but I turned around and decided to just leave a negative review