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Winter Wonderland

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Lost in the blizzard

Paiu Sandra Maria

clasa a XI-a D, Colegiul Național "Garabet Ibrăileanu" Iași, prof. coordonator Ilaș Carmen



My name is Haim, I was once an influential man in the business world. That was before I got sick, and my business to be taken over by my cousin Emicho. I have no siblings, children and family. That's how it's always been. My parents were always busy with work, they never had time for me. And as I grew older, I became just like them, far too absorbed in work to enjoy other things.

One day at the end of November, while I was walking around the yard of the house, I caught a little flower thief. A dirty, petite child with blue eyes and brown hair. When he saw me he started running. In his hand he had two clovers, one with three leaves, and the other that had fallen to him with four leaves. I picked up the clover and shouted for them to come and take it back. He turned in shame, head down, to retrieve his four-leaf clover. "Hey buddy, the three leaf clover isn't as good a deal as the four leaf clover, is it? What's your name?". He raised his head and said "No, it is not. I'm Ezra. What's your name?". I was surprised that his name was Ezra "My name is Haim".

Ezra reminded of me when I was younger. I was always covered in dust from head to toe and Femi (my nanny) always got mad.

Back to the story I asked Ezra "Anyway little sir... where are you from? Do you live nearby?". "Yes, I'm your neighbour" he answered me. It was very strange, I had very few neighbours and I didn't remember any of them having children.

- "Do your parents know you're here?"
- "No, they're not home."
- "Who takes care of you?"
- "My nanny…"
- "Isn't she worried? I have to take you home, buddy..."

"It's okay, don't worry, I'll go alone" and then he ran to the garden gate, until I couldn't see him anymore.

Two weeks had passed since then, Christmas was approaching, and my health had deterio-



rated. Femi came to my room one afternoon, I was reading a book. She had told me that a little boy was looking for me. I told myself it was Ezra and entrusted Femi to bring him to the room.

It was indeed Ezra, he had cheerfully entered the room and seeing me with my hand on the book asked me "What book are you reading?" he had a funny face. "Memories of the future," I replied.

"How can you have a memory of the future?", his face became confused.

"I don't know...that's why I'm reading, to find out."

"When you find out, will you tell me too?"

"Sure!"

"Christmas is coming, you know?" he said to me with a sad face.

"Yes, I know..." I replied.

"I don't want it to come."

Curious, I said "But why? Children like it because they get presents."

"Because... I'm always alone, mum and dad are never home for Christmas."

I was stuck, I didn't know what to say.

"Would you like to spend this Christmas together?"

"Sure, buddy..." I replied with a shaky voice.

"I have to go, see you later!" and he ran out the door.

On Christmas Day, even though I wasn't feeling too well, I was happy to see Ezra. I asked Femi to decorate the house. She hadn't done it in a long time because I was usually not at home for Christmas. When Ezra arrived, he came to my bed and said "I want to give you this". In his cold little hands there was a picture of me and my parents from Christmas Day. I asked him "Where did you get it?" with a voice changed by my tears.

"This is a picture of me and my parents!"

"No Ezra, those are mine!" I yelled at him.

The boy got scared and ran down the stairs, outside into the blizzard. I shouted to Femi to go after him, but she was not answering. I was in terrible pain and with difficulty got up, went down the stairs and reached the door. I was watching the blizzard. Ezra was gone... and tears were streaming down my cheeks.

Ezra never came back and never had a Merry Christmas. Ezra is me. My name is Haim Ezra. The child I told you about is me... All the actions happened only in my imagination, a child left with unfulfilled wishes, wishes crushed by time.



Frozen hearts, a brotherhood story

Leustean lustin

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In an era your grandparents would nostalgically dub as "better times," Gabriel and Ivan, two brothers not by blood but by the crucible of life's trials in Eastern Europe, found themselves standing on the precipice of a significant event on the 22nd of December.

Their intertwined journey commenced within the confines of an orphanage where they, mere children, forged a bond that transcended bloodlines. Hailing from a small city near Rossosh, their departure from the orphanage at ages 14 and 12 marked the beginning of an arduous quest for a better life—a journey encapsulated in the chronicles of their shared experiences.

Their aspirations gravitated toward Moscow, a city that shimmered in their dreams. First stopping in Rossosh, a microscopic town compared to their envisioned destination, Gabriel secured his first job as a waiter, ensuring a modest income to sustain their fragile existence. However, the allure of the big city soon waned, and they resumed their journey, navigating the seasons—spring, a fleeting summer, a brisk autumn, and the cold freezing winter.

Fast forward two years, and the brothers, now aged 16 and 14, found themselves waking up in a tent on the 22nd of December. Eager to escape the bitter cold, they embarked on a trek to Sudakovo, the nearest village. As they trudged through knee-deep snow, the rising sun cast a pale glow on Sudakovo, a quintessential Eastern European village that resisted the passage of time.

Their arrival marked the initiation of a pivotal chapter. Knocking on doors, their hopes fluctuated with each residence, from small and seemingly incapable of offering work to larger dwellings that hinted at possibilities. Eventually, they entered the abode of Mathias, an elderly man whose age mirrored that of the times. Despite his appearance, Mathias possessed the shrewdness of a lion. In exchange for shelter, sustenance, and remuneration, he tasked the brothers with chopping wood, tending to the barn, caring for the animals, and clearing the snow from the yard.

Unbeknownst to the brothers, Mathias harbored a heart as cold as the winter winds. While their industriousness surprised the old man, he reneged on his promise of payment, leaving them with a meager fare of two potatoes and stale bread. Gabriel seethed with anger, but Ivan's calming touch on the shoulder averted a confrontation. They retreated to the barn, where the cold seeped through the hay, prompting them to seek warmth next to Mathias's cow that night.

Morning light revealed a new day, and Gabriel, unable to contain his frustration, confronted Mathias for their due payment. In a swift turn of events, a heated exchange ensued, resulting in Gabriel being shot in the shoulder. The commotion drew the attention of a 40-year-old neighbor, a man of action who swiftly disarmed Mathias, dealt a retaliatory blow, and rushed to Gabriel's aid.

The neighbor, as it turned out, was the village doctor. In the intervening moments, he tended to Gabriel's wound, while Ivan recounted their tumultuous tale to the doctor's wife and two daughters. In an act of profound kindness, the doctor insisted the brothers stay with them until Christmas.

Three days later, after a church service filled with gratitude, the expanded family—parents, two daughters, and two newfound sons—gathered around the table to partake in a meal that symbolized not only the warmth of the hearth but also the enduring bonds that had blossomed amidst the winter's chill.

In the glow of Sudakovo's hearth, once-frozen hearts thawed. Gabriel and Ivan, brothers forged by trials, found a home. The village doctor's family, once strangers, became kin. As Christmas melodies filled the air, the brothers embraced belonging, the true magic of their Winter Wonderland.

Emperor Gulliver from Gullivescu

Mitria-Lumperdean Florentina-Denissa

clasa a IX-a C,

Colegiul Național "Garabet Ibrăileanu", prof. coordonator Ilaș Carmen



Once upon a time there was a king with two children. The youngest of them was Gulliver, a beautiful, hardworking and intelligent child, because his older brother taught him part of everything he knew.

The king had in the neighboring kingdom, called Gullivescu, which was large and prosperous, a younger brother, who was its emperor. Soon after, the emperor because deathly ill and asked the king to send Gulliver to become emperor, because the eldest was the heir to the kingdom and it was impossible.

The king accepted and the young prince started on his way, but halfway, in front of the caravan, the evil, ugly and old witch appeared (she was 10000 years old), who screamed:

"If you want to move on without problems, you have to marry me!"

"I'm not marrying you because I know you'll bring even more suffering to people!"

The witch left foaming, and Gulliver went on. In a short time, he arrived at the gates of the kingdom, where he was greeted by a lot of people. But he didn't even begin to speak when a cloud with the smell of lavender enveloped him and made him sneeze, because he was allergic to that plant. When you get out of the carriage, the people saw a yellow horse in the place of the long-awaited heir. Then, the horse spoke to the people:

"Dear subjects, as you can see, I lost my human appearance because of the witch. If you still want me under this appearance, your leader, tell me!"

The crowd, knowing many good words for this unfortunate man, made him emperor at that

very moment.

So a time passed in which the empire prospered, becoming the most powerful and richest in the world, being envied by the others. The emperor loved the inhabitants of the empire so much that he thought of giving them a Christmas joy. He was going to decorate all the country and a big party in the palace, to which absolutely all people come. While he was making the wonderful plans, the counselor sneaked into his room and put milk and cookies on the table. Gulliver notices him and gives him a frowning but endearing look, the question:

"Why did you sneak into the room? What happened?"

"Emperor, nothing bad happened, but I would like to ask you, out of curiosity, what do you want most for Christmas?"

"My dear friend, I wish to be human for a moment!"

The counselor left the room sad, because everyone knew that nothing could be done to restore this beloved leader to his old appearance.

After this conversation, the emperor kept his word, and on Christmas Eve everything was looking at the lights and listening to the carols of the children in the city, the witch appeared who destroyed everything with a spell and said:

"Because you refused me then, you don't deserve to by happy, especially tonight." And disappeared laughing.

Left alone, Gulliver began to cry because everything he had done for his people was destroyed. His cry was heard by the good fairy, who knew the reason for these tears and the person who shed them.

Taking pity, she came to him and asked him:

"Why are you crying? I can help you by making a wish come true! Your wildest wish."

"Thank you for this kindness, fairy! I really want everything I prepared for my subjects to be in place, as it was before the witch came."

"Surely there wasn't something more important to you? Something else?"

"The happiness of my citizens is the most important and I want to see them happy, especially now, for the holidays!"

Moved, the fairy did just that, but at that moment, Gulliver regained his old appearance. Then the young woman spoke:

"I couldn't remain indifferent to your pure heart, so I made you human again."

But when they looked at each other, they fell in love with each other because they were both attractive. Then, Gulliver looked at the sunrise and asked Lumina if she wanted to be his wife from that day on. Zana happily accepted, and on Christmas day they got married.





Berezenco Anastasia

clasa a X-a, Colegiul Național "Garabet Ibrăileanu", prof. coordonator Busuioc Daniela



Once upon a winter a little girl, full of hopes and dreams, was looking out her window at the beautiful show of falling snowflakes. She didn't have anyone in the world so this was the only comfort she had ever known since her parents weren't with her anymore. Her mother used to tell her legends of how the purest of hearts would be granted a second chance to be among the living and be granted one of the hardest duties there is, to protect.

Following the passing of her parents she was put in an orphanage in which she was not accepted. The caretakers and the other children despised the girl for beeing so hopeful for a beter life, even though everyone knew that could never happen, resulting in her poor treatment.

The young lady always hoped that one day she could be as graceful as the snowflakes were in their dancing. While they were twisting and turning, they whispered to her wonderful stories about her parents and their adventures since they were youngsters to adults and how they fell in love with one another. However they also told her about all the fun and joy they were going to have together once she would join them in their eternal dance.

The thought intrigued her. How could she, a simple girl, join this marvelous creatures? She couldn't imagine it, it would be a dream come true. As she pondered the idea, she started to believe that maybe she had a chance to be with the sparkling fairies.

All troughout her life the liltle lady tried to honor her parents' memory with her good deeds. She never thought ill of anyone that had ever wronged her, she tried to help anyone in need to the maximum of her capabilities and tried to stay positive even though life had never been lesser than hard on her.

The little snowflakes became more persistent, murmuring that they were so excited for the young miss to finally join their eternal happiness. They started to twirl so rapiddly that the window the girl was looking out of flew open.

The young lady was mortifed at first, however after a while she stared to embrace the cold that was wrapping around her, it even began to feel like the warmth of her parents hug. She stumbled over to the window, she had never been so happy in her entire life, the performance of the snowflakes was mesmerizing, she couldn't stop watching them.

They were so lovely with their moves, the litle miss couldn't help herself to not begin imitating the steps. With every move she became more and more graceful, just like the glitery fairies. She stared to feel as light as a feather and finally began to dance in sync with them. She was finally reunited with her parents and nothing could tear them apart ever again. Now they were protected... now they were going to protect her, now they were one with the snowflakes.



Răducanu Maya-Andreea

clasa a IX-a G, Liceul Teoretic "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", prof. coordonator Doboş Diana



What day is it again? All I know is that there's snow all around me and it is very cold, so much so that I can barely feel my fingers anymore. My hands are holding the rifle as I go back to our base of operations, but I cannot feel its weight. The hardness of it would be a comfort to me, a sign that I am still alive. Any sensation would do at this point, when I do not feel human any longer.

As we got back to the trenches, the first thing I saw was that we had got no new food ration packages, which either meant our own country forgot about their soldiers, or that they are just as poor as us. I also saw John, a good friend of mine that joined the army together with me, writing a letter, probably to his wife and kids.

"What have you got there, Johnny boy? Who are you writing to?" I tried to make small conversation, in hopes that talking to someone familiar would warm my body from the inside out. "I'm writing to my wife, mate. After all that happened today, us not getting rations and the day that is upon us, I think I need to inform her of how things are. I don't know how long I have left if I am being honest." he said, a sombre look took hold of his face. "Don't talk like that, we'll make it. We made it this far, what's some more time to you?" I jokingly inquired, hoping to lighten up the mood. "What day is it anyway, if you don't mind telling me? Also the year if you can, please. Really can't remember anything from all of the fighting and firing from earlier on today."

"What? You don't know?" John asked me with a bewildered look. I just stared at him like I was supposed to read the date from his forehead. "It's Christmas! The 25th of December, 1916! How on Earth can you forget?" he was in total shock to see that I had completely forgotten. "Oh, really? I guess the war messed up my perception of time in the worst way possible. It might also be because I don't have anyone waiting for me at home. Oh, well…" I sighed out, not really caring much about Christmas. It was never a celebration that was important in my family. If I'm being honest, we didn't have the money for any type of celebration, we were just trying to get by with how little we had.

Then, out of nowhere, we heard it. A shout of a German soldier coming from the horizon, travelling on the cold night air.

"British army soldiers! It is Christmas! We believe we can ignore the war for one night and be enemies again tomorrow! But today we want to offer you food and company, nobody should be lonely on Christmas!"

John gets up quickly, ready to join the Germans, but I stop him. "What if it's a trap, just to get us all killed?" I asked frantically. "Oh, won't you have a little Christmas spirit? Come on, get up. I'm going to show you what this night is all about."

We step out of the trenches, together with what is left of our army. We all look at each other, waiting to see who takes the first step forward. As the first soldier goes, a second one follows. And so, we all meet in the middle, where the Germans have already prepared a feast. It seems their country feeds them well on holidays.

The night continues with some good food, songs and carols, stories of old and memories from some of the soldiers' childhoods of how Christmas used to be, compared to how we spend it now.

It made me feel like not all hope is lost, that humanity can, one day, come to a sort of peace, understanding, even. That one day there will be no wars, no lives lost for a conflict that starts from something as small as a show of power. John, together with all of the other soldiers from both armies, showed me today that, even enemies, can put aside their differences for maybe just one Christmas, in the spirit of the holiday they grew up enjoying and loving so much.





Underneath the winter sky

Vârlam Andra-Maria

clasa a XI-a B, Colegiul Național "Costache Negruzzi" Iași, prof. coordonator Voicu-Ghenghea Anca



30 years ago...

11 o'clock, and the last lashes of the light disappear into the darkness. To stop time, all you need to do is burn the clock – this way you will release all the pressure of minutes, you will be pushed somewhere outside their limit, and silently you will only wait for eternity. Without the slightest hesitation, with a sure and precise movement, Dalia's fingers, clenched on the wooden clock, let go of their warm embrace. The object is swallowed by the flames. This loss gently warms the room, shrouded in a deadly cold. Stretching out her arm, like a bird's wing encompassing its baby, Dalia brings her daughter closer to the fireplace and makes sure that all the warmth of her body yields to the child who silently licks the strands of blood on her frost-cracked hands. The little girl pulls herself toward her mother and smiles at the black-winged angel she spots, like a vague outline, at the window. This is not the first time that the angel has visited their home, their family (now, only the two of them, but how will Dalia be able to tell her beloved daughter that her father died?).

`Do I open the door? `the woman wondered. Outside, everything is packed for Christmas, but something lurks behind their entrance. God may be the star at the top, but at the base the tree is cut down: it is torn from all that was, and over the suffering of its torn body, divine light protects only a vain promise. Dalia rolls her eyes around the room—if only she could get rid of her tears. They would turn into ice before touching her pale lips. For her only child, she must find something else to keep the fire burning. The wooden horse? Impossible, it was her daughter's only wish. But her husband's diary? No, it's the only memory that hasn't been extinguished by poverty. The moldy bread on the table. Next to it, there's a gorgeous doll – it is impeccably crafted, carefully carved in a kind of delicate porcelain, with glassy eyes and a lace dress. Her most precious thing. As a child herself, she received this Christmas gift from her mother. And now she had to give it up. On the table, the doll ... outside, an angel preparing a new pair of wings. She stood up, determined, and directed her steps towards the table. She grabs the doll and throws it,

through the freezing air, directly into the hungry, reddish mouth of the fire.

She then turns to her daughter, trembling, and drops to her knees, kissing her on her fore-head:

`No worries, baby, now we'll be fine. Merry Christmas!`

Present day...

Almost 12 o'clock, almost midnight. The snow settles smoothly and tirelessly. In the darkness of a path, the sweet light of a lantern leads through the shadows three travelers. They arrive in front of an old house. As her husband and daughter go inside, the woman spots, approaching the house, a faded figure. Only two wings are distinguished. `After so long, you again. ` says the woman to herself.

An old woman lays on a small bad. A smile brightens her face, as she sees her daughter walking in with her family, while painful echoes inevitably return to the days.

Frozen deeds in the cemetery

Nistor Marcu

clasa a XI-a, Colegiul Național "Garabet Ibrăileanu" Iași, prof. coordonator Ilaș Carmen



All is quiet on the frozen Front. Layers of snow, with the occasional mound, cover the otherwise wet soil of this grim "made on the spot" graveyard, the playing field of an endless soccer match: the players (clueless little tin soldiers) advancing and retreating in the same perimeter, all reaching for a nonexistent ball. There are plans, of course, but who ever follows them? The usual disorganization of war. Chaos. But now it's calm, a bit of rest for the undead troop.

Thick fog is making it hard to see anything. The trenches remain the same filthy mess they were before, maybe more muddy, maybe more cold. A little more barren. Small, swift screams and shouts can sometimes be heard coming from them. They call for people, help, things. Not often are there answers for these human cries for comfort. Not of out malevolence, but a lack of possibility. In times like this, each is on their own: from entire regiments to disjointed platoons, to teams of few. Only the closest and kindest will give in and share with the one near them. Humanitarian instinct over self-preservation is a rare sight.

In one of the cramped underground huts, covered by soaked wooden planks, people sit packed together as canned sardines, as to warm up. A faint fire, in the middle, futilely tries to heat up the dilapidated building, giving out lethargic puffs of smoke. There shivering soldiers tell stories and play games, as to pass this time. Or at least they did at first, the first few days of the very first winter. Track of time has now been lost; who knows how much has passed since they first joined this somber, cold game.

One man in the middle, dressed in thin summer clothing and only covered by some rup-

tured rubber trench coat, with an icy frail mustache, ruminates while chewing on some dirty snow, as to suppress a burning hunger. Same does his friend besides him. Another man, more appropriately clothed, with a punctured green hat, suddenly approached and said to them this:

"It's time to move."

No answer. He continued, with long pauses between sentences:

"Look, we all know it's hard. And we all know we didn't sign up for this. But we MUST do this job. It's integral to us succeeding and finally going home."

The word home sparked some hope in the troop's eyes. Noticing this, he added:

"We still have some rations left. Even hot chocolate. We'll feed you before and after."

It took this little for them to be convinced: after devouring a pack of biscuits in seconds, and putting hot coffee in their thermoses, they were ready. The task? Deliver some parcel to the other side, sneaking trough an enemy line. Stepping on the slippery crust made loud cracking noises. They were slowly advancing trough "no man's land"... An unnerving walk through a white wasteland. Good thing for the watery smog, the sleet announcing a blizzard. But this is a double edged sword: out of the blue, from a wrong step, one of the persons fell in an half dug (or partly full?) dike, producing a strident noise from hitting his helmet and weapon on a frozen pile of leftover munitions. Then, a shriek: a bayonet-penetrated leg. As soon as this, it was over. Guns could be heard cocking, and a bright light pierced the mist. Yells in a foreign language. Hails. They were closer than the messengers had thought. In fear, the couriers tried climbing out but slipped, then opened fire, stumbled, missed. Nothing left to do. Only to beg for mercy. But when has that ever worked?

Slowly, the rival foe emerged from the haze, pointing rifles at the intruders, blinding them with lanterns, ready to shoot at any move. Shocked, the prey came to be numb. But to their surprise, there was a "Halt!" - they stopped a few meters in front. An intimidating better-dressed man, presumably the commander, stepped forth and spoke strange words. Silence, no understanding. He then exclaimed "Come!" in a heavy accent. Are they going to capture them, kill them like dogs? No movement. Then he spoke to a chum and, after a few seconds, a medic came forth to inspect their wounds. And then another soldier with food, one with hot tea, one with blankets. And this despite the fact they seemed in the same sub-par condition as them, and that they were ENEMIES. Cold blooded enemies at that! The same ones they have been fighting for dozens of months!

It's been a few days since this event. It's snowing. Our two men, followed by opposing forces, make their way to the original camp. Despite suspicions and conflicting feelings, the miserable garrison accepted the antagonists in their nest. Two weeks later, newspapers across the globe were printing the same headline "Peace is made on cold front. The wonder of winter hits the "no man's land"."



Nedelcu Ana

clasa a XI-a A, Liceul cu Program Sportiv Iași, prof. coordonator Onuța Mihaela



It was the middle of December and everyone was getting ready for the magical day of Christmas. Snow was slowly falling, the scent of oranges was everywhere and so were the Christmas songs that were blasting all around the city and kids playing in the snow was an everyday view. The giant Christmas tree in the center of the city was captivating everyone's eye with its ornaments and everyone swore it looked out of a fairytale. Everyone bought Christmas ornaments, food and presents for their family and friends and they were patiently waiting for the big day.

While all of these were happening, all the TVs were reporting news about a 7 year old girl who went missing 2 days ago without any trace. The citizens got extremely worried and they decided to help the police and the girl's family with the searching instead of focusing on this significant day. Everyone searched for her all that day but they didn't find nothing and they lost some of their hope in finding her.

Cindy Lou, a 10 year old girl, was friendly, playful, full of energy and open minded. She has blonde hair, braided in two and blushing pink cheeks. When she heard about her friend's disappearence, she went searching with her dog and the rest of the city. She took a sleigh and she went searching everywhere, helping the others, hoping that she'll find a trace of her friend but she unfortunately didn't.

She arrived home at night and she told her mom during dinner that she found nothing.

"Maybe you should climb up the mountain. What if she followed a squirrel or got lost from her parents?" her mom said while pouring water in a cup. The girl thought about what her mom said and she arrived at the conclusion that she was right.

"You're right! I'll climb tomorrow the mountain to find her!" she shouted excitedly, "Can I bring some friends?" she asked her mom while looking up at her with puppy eyes.

"Sure, but don't arrive later than 10 P.M., alright?"

"Deal!" the girl said while running up the stairs to her room

The next day the girl woke up excited but also worried because she was about to climb the mountain hoping to find her friend while bringing their friend group. They all met in the center of the city then they started walking through a small forest while sharing theories ab their missing friend.

It had been a while since they started climbing and the path was very narrow and covered in ice and small sharp rocks so they had to be careful where they stepped.

"How much longer are we going through this frost? My toes literally froze!" a boy named Fred asked.

"Just a little longer, and watch out all the time! We don't know when we'll see or hear anything realated to her."

Not long after that they came upon a huge cave, with an enormous fir-wood door.

- "Who would live in a place like this?" another girl, Lisa, asked.
- "I don't know, but I feel like something aloof is living here" Fred replied, visibly worried.
- "Well, we gotta find out one way or another!" Cindy said and knocked on the door three times. Nothing. She knocked one more time and they heard some angry stomps from inside the cave.

The door opened and in its threshold stood an ugly creature, tall and green, that needed to learn how to use water and soap. This is Grinch, he wore a Santa hat and a white apron, now stained with fresh blood.

"Hey, down here!" Cindy shouted and the creature looked down.

"Cindy! Long time no see! Get inside quick, you're all freezing!" he said and made room for them to enter, locking the door behind them.

"How did y'all get here?" he asked them.

"We lost our friend two days ago and we don't know where to look for her anymore, we looked for her all over the city and also in the nearby villages but we found nothing" said Fred, who was still freezing.

"I'm really sorry to hear that, can you describe her? Maybe I saw her and didn't realize it was her."

"Well, she's 7 years old, she has brown curly hair, green eyes and she wears glasses. She always wears her hair in a braid." Cindy said.

"Hmmm, I don't think I saw her, and even if I did I'd send her back in town"

"You really haven't seen her? Please try to recap everything that happened in the last 2-3 days!" Cindy said, still having some hope.

"I am trying to but I really can't. I'm so sorry!" The children looked down in disappointment. Grinch quickly changes the subject:

"I was cooking dinner. If you still came to my place, wouldn't you like to try what I made? I cooked too much food and I can't eat it all by myself." he asked.

"Sure, why not? Do y'all want to try what he made?" Cindy asked the others and they nod-ded happily.

The creature went to the next room where there was some kind of kitchen, with blood-stained walls full of pictures of tens children who went missing long time ago.

He tried to fit through all the dirty dishes and animal remains, making his way to the stove where some kind of soup of a weird colour was boiling, and under that was the oven, where a disgusting pie made of all sorts of body parts was slowly baking. He lifted the lid of the pot and dipped his index finger in the soup and then licked it.

"Perfect! They can't even think of what's going to happen to them!" he said to himself with a chuckle, taking 5 bowls and pouring the so-called soup, then he put them on a wood board, adding a slice of bread for each one of them and walked up to their table.

"I hope y'all like it! I didn't get to taste it and I really want to know if it actually tastes good! I'm going to check on the pie, y'all can eat peacefully, don't hurry! Bon appetit!" the creature said as it hurried back to the kitchen.

"So let's have a taste!" Cindy said and they all started eating. After a while Fred notices something in his soup:

"What is this?" he asked confused, pulling out an incredibly large eye that filled his whole spoon.

"It's from an animal" said another little girl.

"It tastes strange" another boy said.

"It tastes like pork" said Cindy "but something seems strange" she continued, mostly to herself, continuing to eat.

They had barely finished their soup, then they waited for the pie.

"What's taking him so long to bring a pie? It better not be as weird as the soup!" Fred furiously said.

"Hey, he does as well as he can! Be grateful!" said Lisa

"That's right!" said a creey, low voice from behind them, from the kitchen. "Be thankful!"

Suddenly, there was a sinister vibe, Cindy felt that something was wrong, she didn't know what exactly. He walked up to them:

"Let me know how you like it!" he said while handing each one of them a slice of the long awaited pie.

They hesitated at first but ate it anyway seeing the insistence in the sinister bloodcurdling blue eyes of the evil creature. Cindy started eating the slice slowly, like the rest, until she cut a small piece with her fork and saw inside it half of a pair of glasses. She gently pulled it out, confused at this strange sight, until she had a pair of glasses in her hand, with broken lenses. She looked at it amused for a few seconds but then she dropped her fork in realisation of what was going on and her eyes welled up tears.

Everyone looked at her in shock, then at Grinch, who was staring into her soul while holding a huge knife.

Moments later she heard screams, as if she was in a horror movie, and desperate cries as she layed unconscious on the floor in a pool of blood.

Drincess ballerina

Mititelu Aura Manuela

clasa a X-a D, Colegiul Național "Vasile Alecsandri" Iași, prof. coordonator Ramona Dragu



When was the last time you had a dream?

My name is Alice, and I am a seventeen-year-old girl who loves to do ballet. I have been practicing ballet since I was four, and I want to get to the ballet school in Paris, but my family's financial situation doesn't allow me to. December 23rd is a very important day for me. I have a ballet performance and I will perform a choreography in front of the director of the ballet school I dream of. I'm excited. I hear my parents and my little brother talking in the living room and get-

ting ready to drive me to the opera. I don't know yet how I feel; I'm afraid, but at the same time, I'm excited to give my best on the stage. The scene became my second family. It has always been with me, at every moment of anxiety, every moment I have felt insecure or alone. Ballet makes me happy. Lately, I found my refuge in ballet. I'm having a hard time. My boyfriend and I broke up a month ago, and since then, ballet has brought me happiness. Christmas is in two days, and all I want is for my dream to become reality.

I got in the car. I'll be at the opera in fifteen minutes. I count every minute and every second. I look out the window at the sky, the snow, and the streets like it's the last time I see them. On the radio, they sing Christmas songs. I feel better and better.

The opera is where I'm at right now and I'm about to go on stage. The room is full, and the director of the ballet school is sitting on a chair and watching the stage with incomparable attention. He is wearing a scarf and a very funny hat. The piece that I'm going to interpret is the Nutcracker. I love my costume. I have a pastel pink tutu with golden details that make me feel like a real princess waiting for her prince to take her dancing. My hair is caught in a bun behind my back, and the golden crown with precious stones catches everybody's attention.

The lights are going to go out, but before each piece, I like to close my eyes and imagine that I am part of the action.

I opened my eyes, but in front of me there was no longer the great public waiting to enter the stage but I was at home. My family was getting ready for the Christmas party organizes every year. I'm very confused. How did I get home at a time like this, and why does my family seem so different? Music is playing in every room and the smell of cinnamon and celebration makes me happy. The party comes to life and everyone is dancing. My mom pairs up with my dad and my brother Derek along with my older sister Brianna. Uncle Christopher shows up with a gift for me and my brother because our sister is already too big for toys.

In the box there is a wooden soldier doll that can break nuts. I am captivated by the little nutcracker. My brother gets jealous, so we start arguing over the wooden doll. One moment was enough for us so that the nutcracker was dropped and broken. I was very angry with Derek and I had no hope that the soldier could be repaired.

Troubled, I took my soldier in my hand and lay on the couch in the living room, hoping to find a solution, but I had fallen asleep.

And what a deep sleep I had! I feel better, but the wooden doll is still not repaired, and I become sad again. I get up from the couch, and the room is dark. I cannot see anything. It's very quiet. Where are my parents, and why is there not even a Christmas song? I turn on the light and see a giant closet. This is my closet, but why is it so big? And the couch too? Am I dreaming, or has the whole room really changed? What happened?

The tense moment is disturbed by strange sounds and a bright light is coming out of the closet. I walk to the closet and open it. Inside the closet there was a real imaginary world, a castle so beautiful, as if removed from the bed stories for children. It was a white castle, pure white, clean with Christmas ornaments, and a wonderful garden covered with snow duvet. The entrance of the castle attracts my attention. It had a long, golden carpet for several kilometres.

I was looking at everything in admiration. Was it all real, or was it just a dream? Firstly, I woke up at home while I was at the play, and now I'm here? I understand absolutely nothing. I walk on the extensive carpet and reach the castle lobby. I was shocked. In front of the Christmas tree stood the Nutcracker. Expecting me. But I cannot explain how he came to life. That is already too much. Somebody pinch so I wake up from this dream.

Not for long do I look at the Nutcracker, that a mouse appears with the crown of the king on his head and a sceptre. Behind him were dozens of armed mice. The mouse threatens the Nutcracker, and then a huge battle begins. The Nutcracker, helped by the reindeer, dolls, and robots, fights with the mouse king and his army. I was very scared. I didn't know how I could help the wooden soldier. At that moment, I had only an idea: to distract the king of the mouse. So I did, during which time the nutcracker put the mouse on the ground. The mouse again threatened the wooden soldier and told him he would return at midnight.

The nutcracker looked at me proudly, thanking me that I saved him.

"Your Majesty, since we were all waiting for you, the castle had been waiting for its queen for seventeen years. Your parents would have been proud of you if they saw you now. The people miss our queen so much!"

"But what do you mean by "would have been"? My parents are home, preparing the house for the party!"

"It's a long story; you're the heir to the castle throne, and your biological parents were the kings of the kingdom. We lost them seventeen years ago, when your Majesty was only one year old. They went on the ship to Germany to sign a peace treaty, but the merciless weather did not bring them back. Then your majesty was taken by your uncle Christopher and cared for by an adoptive family who were very close to your parents. I am here to guide you and teach you how to rule the kingdom."

"Shall I rule a kingdom? Am I the daughter of kings? I don't understand anything. You were just a doll! How have you come to life?"

"I was a doll, which is true, but your uncle gave me the power to catch life when I wanted."

"My uncle planned everything? Did he know everything? Why am I only finding out now?"

"Today is your birthday, and you are 18 years old; you are the age required to ascend to the throne."

"How can that be? My birthday is September 19th. All my life, I have lived in a lie. And the ballet show? What happened to him, and how did I get home as soon as I closed my eyes?"

"When your parents died, your uncle paid a visit to the sorcerer of the kingdom, who offered him a magical flower. He used it to have magical powers. It has also given you powers that you can use only after you are eighteen years old. When you were on stage, you closed your eyes and imagined the scene from the nutcracker, so you got home and then in the enchanted closet."

"Everything seems logical now, but I don't feel ready to be a queen. I'm just an eighteen-year-old girl."

"That's why I'm here to help you; that's after we beat Joseph; that's why the king of the mice wants to steal the magic flower that your uncle used and which is now hidden in the secret room of the palace. He's been trying to steal it for years, but you're here to defeat him."

"First, I want to go back home; I'm too shocked, and I can't explain some things to myself."

"Of course, all you have to do is close your eyes and imagine your home!"

I came home, but my house is no longer the same. My parents are not my parents. I feel abandoned, even though I have so many people around, who love me. My brother comes to me and hugs me tight. He apologizes for what he did, but he does not know that we are not biological brothers. Although we don't have the same parents, I love him the same and can't be angry with him. My mother calls me to her with her voice trembling, and she begins to cry, asking me to forgive her because she has hidden the truth from me all these years. I hug her tight and smile at her,

saying that I love her and thank her for raising me as a child and not leaving me in someone else's hands.

This whole situation made me stronger; I knew my family loved me and supported me. I'm ready to be the queen and fight for my loved ones!

Midnight is approaching, and I will return to the palace to defeat Joseph!

The lights are out, and there is a disturbing silence in the palace. I'm headed to the secret room of the castle. Hidden behind the door, I see Joseph trying to break the glass box in which the flower was placed, but it seems that he fails. The glass is hard to break.

I walk slowly towards him and grab his coat. Then Joseph draws his sword, and I manage to kick the sword and escape a possible attack. From behind, the Nutcracker appears and manages to give him the winning shot.

So we go back home and Uncle Christopher is waiting for us in front of the door with a big box in his hand. I was looking at the box when he gave me the wooden soldier. From the box, he brings out the magic flower he offered me and tells me to wish one last thing, the third wish that the flower fulfilled. My wish was for the Nutcracker to be turned into a boy. Thus, the Nutcracker was now a handsome, tall boy with a charming smile.

"Are we going to be introduced again? he asked me, taking my hand."

"I would love to!"

"My name is Daniel, or the Nutcracker!"

"I'm Alice, and I'm glad to meet you!"

It was love at first sight. Together with Daniel, I became the queen of the castle in the enchanted city, and the people were very pleased with the new heirs to the throne. And let's not forget the ballet show. I closed my eyes again, and together with Daniel, hand in hand, we returned to the opera scene and interpreted the story from the Nutcracker that had now become reality. I was the princess who danced with her prince. The show was very successful, and the director of the ballet school in Paris found the student he had been looking for.

I will study at the ballet school, not alone but with Daniel, a pair of professional dancers. Can you believe it? Two dreams fulfilled before Christmas! It was the most beautiful experience.

And did you really think I was speaking to you from the present? You thought wrong!

Now it's Christmas again, but I'm not that eighteen-year-old girl; it's been 10 years since then. I have a great family,two beautiful children and I am living my dream with Daniel. I am a ballerina in the long-dreamt castle and I am dancing looking at the stars!

The end



Teodoru Alexia

clasa a IX- a, Colegiul Național "Garabet Ibrăileanu" Iași, prof. coordonator Carmen Ilas



Once upon a time, there was a young girl named Carla who was growing up in a loving but very poor family. Even though they had a hard time financially, Carla always had a smile on her face and a lot of love for everyone around her. Like every other kid her age, the little girl loved everything that had to do with Christmas, from the shining lights to the delicious food that her mother always took the time to prepare and the atmosphere of hope surrounding the holiday. She loved presents, even though she didn't receive many in her life due to her family's situation, but the thing she wished for the most was a Christmas tree.

Her family could never afford to get a Christmas tree, Carla's longing for it started when she read in a children's book that Santa Claus comes to all the kids on Christmas Eve and leaves gifts under their beautifully decorated trees. For our little girl, it seemed like an impossible fantasy because she was used from a very early age to how hard it was to earn money, so believing in getting something for free, without having to work for it, was hard to believe.

This year's Christmas was nothing new. Carla was sitting at the dinner table in her humble living room, surrounded by her beautiful family. Her mother prepared all sorts of delicious foods and desserts, which the young girl and her father enjoyed. For a few happy moments, she even forgot about the unfortunate condition of her family. What mattered then was the fact that they all loved each other more than they could even express in words. But, with all the love Carla got from her parents, she couldn't help but long after all the things other kids her age had, like presents, beautiful decorations, and the beloved Christmas tree.

After finishing dinner, the little girl helped her mother clean up and then went to sleep. Before falling into the realm of dreams she said only one thing in her mind "I wish to have a beautiful Christmas tree to put presents under" and with that she fell asleep.

The next morning, she woke up before either of her parents and went straight to the living room. There, she saw a magical sight that took her breath away. A stunning Christmas tree stood tall in the corner, decorated with twinkling lights and shimmering ornaments. Underneath it, a pile of beautifully wrapped presents awaited her. The little girl's eyes filled with joy as she realized that her wish had come true. She hurried to tell her parents about the magical tree and how her dream finally came true. At first, Carla's mom and dad were puzzled because of the miracle that had happened but when they saw how happy their little girl was, they decided to put all their suspicions aside and enjoy a happy Christmas in the company of each other.

In the end, Carla's dream came true and she had the best Christmas of her life with her very loving parents.



Bran Robert-Ionut

clasa a XII-a, Colegiul Tehnic CF "Unirea" Pașcani, prof. coordonator Diaconu Daniela



Once upon a time in a small town in Antarctica, there was a boy named Josh. Josh was a joyful soul, respectful young man and helper at the local foster house. I know, despite being in the middle of the nowhere as some may say, this town had a foster house for all the lonely children out in this town.

Josh was living a happy life with his family, he had a little boy named Josh Junior looking exactly like him and a beautiful wife that was waiting for him every night with a warm home and food on the table. They were living close to the end of the town, and all of the institutions were in the middle of the town, the police station, the fire station, even the doctors were living in the middle of the town because there were better conditions, but the foster house, was in the middle of the road, in between Josh's house and the middle of the town, so, it was easy for Josh to go to work.

One night, at around 10 p.m., someone called from the foster house, a kid, Oliver, a friend of Josh Junior, had an accident. The little boy was playing with the other kids before going to bed, and suddenly he fell from his bed by being pushed by an another kid. He was fine, but as soon as Josh heard what happened, he quickly ran to the foster house.

He got there, checked on everybody and thanked God it was just a playful night between boys, because if it was worse, who knows, maybe he needed to call an ambulance and the roads were closed due to the heavy snow that was falling from the sky that night.

Josh made sure everything was alright, put everyone to sleep because almost all the kids were listening only to Josh, because he was treating them the best, and then he left.

On the way home though, Josh was having some difficulties due to the weather, he was walking on a steep hill and oh Lord he fell down hitting the ground so bad that he broke his head.

Only him and God himself know the pain that he went through, but he was fine still. He was trying to climb the hill so someone can maybe see him and help him, but after endless tries, he fell harder to the ground hurting himself more and more. He thought he had no chance of go-

ing back home to his wife, to his kid, to work, he thought he lost all chances to happiness until something happened, a group of people were walking on the street past the accident site, I know, it may not seem that much because he fell, but Josh was a pretty big guy and he made a pretty big mark where he fell.

One of the people in the group noticed and told the others: "Hey, what's happening there?"

The group looked, they weren't seeing that much but snow and just ignored it, but that one guy that noticed, went to investigate.

His friends were leaving him alone, until this happened: "Hello! Hello, is somebody there?"

That's when Josh heard the voice and thought it was an angel trying to help him, he responded screaming: "Down here! Please help me!" The guy went down to Josh, seeing him in that condition made him immediately alert and he quickly called his friends to help him.

They took Josh from there and helped him go to the doctor urgently. Thank God he was back on his feet the next week, the doctor told him that if he were to stay there for another thirty minutes, he wouldn't have made it. Josh realized that this was a Winter Wonder and that the town he was living in was a Winter Wonderland.

Winter Wonderland

Rotundu Denisa Ștefania

clasa a XII-a, Liceul Tehnologic Economic de Turism Iași, prof. coordonator Matei Beatrice-Anca



"The little monster stayed in his own cave, afraid to come out of the suffocating shell. He longed to raise his eyes, to witness the natural habitat of birds, the navy blue sky, but the weight of guilt wouldn't let him. He never felt happiness nor freedom. How could he? He was a monster after all.

One day, as he was staring at the pitch black cave that reflected a bit of light from the burning sun, a trinket sound could be heard from a distance. He narrowed his eyes to see a tiny fairy emerging from the mysterious world he yearned to know, coming closer and closer. He recoiled in fear, scared upon laying eyes on the little wings that kept shivering and scattering silver all around them, making a sight unworthy of his demon eyes. As he was contemplating whether his time on earth was compromised or not, he suddenly found himself gazing at her kind and energetic eyes that were emanating a blue light just like the sky he ached to understand, piercing his soul. It wasn't a human, nor an animal. Then what was she? She was a helping hand for the suffering creature trapped in his self-isolation. A guide carrying the promise to unravel the monster's true purpose, hidden beneath the scars left by humans, and to reimpose his only wish. Freedom. "Don't stop fighting." were the first words uttered by the fairy, while looking the creature in the



The tale The Little Monster And The Fairy was dismissed by many as a mere story with no value behind it, but for Cookie, its essence played a significant role in shaping his journey. Though he was not a human, or a literary intellectual, he grasped the principle better than anyone else. Just like the little monster, Cookie had been discarded and left to navigate the world alone, trapped in a man-made labyrinth trying to find the exit, the same way a mouse would.

Cookie was a stray dog, left to roam around by unfeeling humans, his story similar to that of the monster in the cave. As a puppy, he saw a bright future ahead of him. But everything went downhill as the years went by and he became invisible in the eyes of those who had once cherished him, just like the stars flickering in the colorless night, would leave the sky with a sigh, to make way for the sun.

As another sorrowful night unfolded, Cookie was let down one last time by his owners, they abandoned a lonely soul that stuck with them through tough times. Leaving him on the desolate streets seemed a more suitable option. Cookie heard the door closing with a loud thud behind him. His pleading eyes and excessive scratching on the white door would not make his owners change their minds, Cookie thought. Realizing they wouldn't come back, he stopped. Admitting defeat, Cookie left, wandering through unfamiliar streets, his little cold paws making traces in the white snow, searching for his fairy with wings that scattered silver. It was too early to give up.

On a fateful night of January, in a park with muffled sounds, Cookie was reminiscing. It was there that he laid eyes on a human. She kneeled in front of the creature, meeting its lingering gaze and extended her arm. With a pounding heart, he stayed still, and with a slow motion of the human hand, he felt affection after a long time. Looking up, he could make out the shape of her face, the eyes that were full of pity and the red scarf that was half on the ground because of how long it was. Cookie leaned closer to the scarf, just to feel a bit of its warmness. The girl chuckled and started to take off her scarf. Cookie thought he would get yelled at for smearing his wet and dirty coat on her scarf, but when he closed his eyes in anticipation, he was to be met with the coziness of the scarf on his tiny body. Peeking enthusiastically, the girl sensed Cookie's yearning for love and decided to be the fairy Cookie had been waiting for.



It's snowing!

Petrovici Parascheva

clasa a IX-a B, Colegiul Național "Garabet Ibrăileanu" Iași, prof. coordonator Busuioc Daniela



Have you ever wondered what it would be like to stop snowing? Winter would just be a colder season, with no reason to leave our homes. Well... for almost 15 years no person on this earth has seen snow!

The last snowfall was on the day I was born. My mother once told me that it was the most magical snowfall she had ever seen. The snowflakes seemed to surround me to see my green eyes that were sparkling looking at them. I still remember how I could almost hear their laughter of joy, but also a sad goodbye! The sky covered with clouds wasn't showing much emotion, but I could still understand the sad story it was telling so loudly.

14 winters of sadness have passed since then. I live with my mother in a small house at the edge of the forest. Since I was little, I have spent most of my time in the forest, because I can hear the joy of the flowers when a bud blooms, the sigh of the old trees when the cold comes, the sadness of the stars when the day breaks, or the evening stories told by the moon that I often listen to before going to bed.

It was the evening before my 15th birthday when I was walking among the trees, hearing how they were saying good night to each other. Something that I'd never heard before drew my attention: children's voices saying "Really? Did something like that fall from the sky?" or "I would like to see the snow one day" and the voices of some older people answering them: "Snow was the miracle of winter" or "Do you want me to tell you one more time how I built an igloo from the snow?". When I found the place where the voices were coming from, I found a huge white wolf sleeping near a tree. He slowly raised his head and asked me "Can you hear them too?". His eyes were bright white like two pearls and his voice was deep and intimidating, but at the same time so gentle. I nodded. He told me to follow him and disappeared, leaving a trail of smoke. Before I knew it, I was on a deserted mountain, lifeless, as if it was sad because it had lost something. The wolf pointed to a grave, telling me: "This was the reason why there was snow. A man whose purpose in life was established from the day he was born: to bring snow to the world. You may wonder why the one who brings the rain doesn't do this in the winter so that the rain turns into snow, right? Well... snow is different from rain. Snow is a sacred thing that does not come from a simple phenomenon like rain, even if it's made of water, it comes from a strong heart that is able to bring such special weather. Now it is your time to do it. Do you think you are ready?". I looked at the clouds that were impatiently waiting for my answer and then at the wolf and said seriously, but also with a little doubt: "Yes!". "Then listen to your heart! Listen to the voices of all the children who want to see snow! Listen to the clouds floating in the sky and tell them to make it snow!" said the wolf. I took a deep breath, closed my eyes and after some time I felt a light and wet touch on my nose. I couldn't believe my eyes!

The sky was not looking at me without emotion, but this time it was smiling at me with pride. I was surrounded by snowflakes as if they were giving me a warm reunion hug. The stars began to dance with joy and the moon was silently watching the event, with the same feeling. Gusts of wind were doing acrobatics around me, as a sign that they also wanted to take part in the hug. I started to hear the happy voices of the people who went outside, just to see, for the first time in all these years, that the joy of winter finally returned!

December Cold

Rusu Eliza-Rianna

clasa a XII-a, Colegiul Național "Garabet Ibrăileanu" Iași, prof. coordonator Ilaș Carmen



born from a star that died on its way to infinity left alone in the world, without destiny or any purpose

floating carelessly through space, foreign,

tender as a flower, fragile as a feather dazzling skin, dark eyes the hair, thread in time, she's unspeaking, but she tames your soul with her song, about the world she doesn't know about the life she leads among the other stars, far from Earth..

"You were born in December, that's what you'll be called

that winter arrives with you, you are the hope for them all.

you will turn the plain into beauty be careful, don't break down when you cry 'cause the earth will quake a storm that would end the world will come and you'll be alone."

that was the mother star's speech before it shattered:

majestic supernova, prodigious powers. entrusted December with her celestial gifts "grow, little star, learn to live."

up there among the celestial bodies
the "little star" grew
into a beautiful, pale, night-eyed peers,
hair of white silk,
hands of ice and a heart of fire,
each winter
with a delicate movement
she makes stardust from faded stars
and spreads it on the ground.
her sublime singing voice
wanders nowhere and everywhere
through the immortal cosmos.

the selfish moon, doesn't quite accept her; until the girl appeared, the stars were looking at her.

since December came, the Moon wrinkled of sadness and anger. her time has passed, her pride is fading flooded by rage she pushes the girl into the unknown...
she falls, heavily,
gazing into space, singing softly
,,that was it", she thought.
great pain in her soul, she leaves behind
everything she does,
everything she loves.

a strange orb appears under her feet closed eyes, open arms her wings grow and help her fly. Vega is still watching over her as she falls easily on the ground. gravity tries her, weakened, she lies helpless far away from home.

little wilted flower stands beyond life and the end she cries with the tears she has left. a hazy image from far flung "what if it's another star?" a strange feeling overtakes her when the creature gets closer approaching her cautiously, slowly raising her porcelain face as her eyelids cover the dark ...she lost her spark.

two or three hours go by and December wakes in a bed of roses. she tries to get up, but her legs weakened from the fall are not good for anything at all.

scared, fragile, sings with a trembling voice, with her palms together and her head down, humble...

her song is intruded by a prince who asks: "what happened, little girl?" she doesn't know how to speak about the world she leaved. she looks up, pointing to the sky the stark sparkle in an assonant rhythm now he knows: "she's from the stars".

with rose petals he wipes her tears
but the petals freeze, and so his hand.
the room is cold
night in her thoughts is shown
she is lost in his eyes
she feels alive.
she lightly touches his wreath trampled in his
hair, now it's frozen.
"what is this feeling? how should I call it?"
puzzled, worried
withdraws her hands right away
he smiles at her, shivering
the December cold begins.

the moon among the clouds stands alone
the stars are gathering in the sky
constellations, they all look
at the the girl discovering the world
of the mortals, uncaring beings;
she slowly know love.
the prince tells December about the world,
about people, about the sun and life

beings and spirits about everything and nothing. overwhelmed by a tin feeling, a spark in the night lights up and love slowly shows in their parallel worlds.

two winters have passed
their love, strange language.
the birds die with frozen beaks
longing for the sun's rays
which warmed them at night;
the colors disappear.
worried for his people
the prince does whatever he can
if it's warm, December will fade away,
for him, when it's cold it goes the same... "for
the sake of love!"
she never perishes, "but I do...

oh, what don't I do for love?"
"but do you still love us?" asks a deer with weakened legs.
distressed, but blinded by love the prince tells: "share my happiness! I found it, this is my destiny, I know, without doubt that next to the snow I belong"

another winter passes, two, maybe three, the flowers broke, the beings froze. December snows... unconscious. lying in a bed of frozen flowers the prince sees her through the window his love never ends but he does. easy... he calls her she comes closer, caresses his head "I think I will become a star" he said. December, confused, scared holds him by the hand before his eyes close. she sings to him, whispers his name but in vain... his wreath breaks in thousands of shards.

December cold... desolation.

"What have I done?" howl at the stars. looking around, no living thing. just ice figures, deserted world... "What have I done?" a tear falls, two and ninety-nine more, from a delicate woman she becomes a fearsome creature. broken heart, the cold of December destroy everything; stormy snow makes everything disappear the land that was once...now a memory to know.

born from a star that died on its way to infinity crinkly wanders through the world her voice is still alive... but no one hears it anymore. every winter with a delicate movement and spreads stardust on the ground, "snow... that's all I have left." winter rain, frozen. the cold of December wanders nowhere and everywhere in the world without future.

Winter Wonderland

Grosu Alexia

clasa a IX-a, Colegiul Național "Vasile Alecsandri" Iași, prof. coordonator Mihaela Manolache

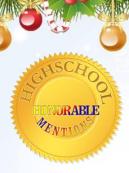


In the charming paradise of Santa Claus, his bag was stolen as it was: full of presents, wrapped in shades of colors, symbols, glitter and mystery. Before this event, Santa Claus had a misunderstanding with his best elf, named Belsnickel. All day long they made toys, coming up with ideas for an ideal Christmas, helped Lady Claus make gingerbread, cookies and the best hot

chocolate. But at one point, Santa Claus began to make the last preparations for the most extraordinary evening of the year. Disturbed by the fact that he was no longer receiving attention, Belsnickel began to break the Secret Rules of the Elves. When he was caught by his family destroying Santa's sleigh, he turned into a human, the being he hated very much.

On Pierce Street, there lived a modest and beautiful family, but lost in a maze of thoughts. A year ago, Teddy and Lisa's father had a work accident. He sacrificed himself in a fire where he saved many lives. Lisa always asked herself: Why did my father risk his life for unknown people instead of returning to his family? The father of the two children had a special way of decorating the house, which was like a star that illuminated the spirit of Christmas. The bright lights, the beautiful snow tree, decked with emotions of happiness, the stockings with their names hanging from the fireplace and the evenings when the parents of the two children danced and thought of a special future with Lisa and Teddy. Their mother was a nurse and she worked very hard to ensure her children a life without hardships. After his father's death, Teddy and Lisa did not get along at all. They were always arguing, not realizing how painful it was for their mother to see her unique flowers stop talking. This year, the house was not decorated. It was a strange house, devoid of life and spirit, but at least they spent their time making delicious cookies and listening carols. On Christmas Eve, snowflakes were singing on the street, and the children's mother was called to work, because of an emergency. After a few hours, the two siblings noticed a note in front of the fireplace. It said: "Hello, true believers! I'm sending you a distress message from the North Pole. You two, Lisa and Teddy, are my only hope. In your hands lies the life of Christmas. You have to find a way to open the portal to my city." It all seemed like a dream, but they knew for sure that the message was from Santa Claus. Not everyone knew about the term 'True believer'. Teddy started humming the song "Oh, Christmas Tree", thinking about the message from Santa. How could they open a portal? At that point, they notice how a green color begins to appear under the Christmas tree. They realized that their father's favorite carol is the way to go to Santa's town. They fell into a snow blanket in front of Santa's reindeer. At that moment, Santa Claus and Lady Claus appeared. They found Belsnickel near the Christmas tree, where he realized that Christmas must bring joy to the whole world. At that point, realizing that, and overcoming his own moody disposition, Belsnickel turned into an elf again. Lisa learned the language of the elves and Teddy learned to drive Santa's magic sleigh.

After saying goodbye to Santa, the two children found their home beautifully decked, just as their father used to decorate it in the past. They found gifts under the tree, illuminated by feelings and thoughts of gratitude and acceptance. Lisa got the skateboard she wanted, and Teddy wanted to see his father again. He found a golden globe and a note that said: "That's all I could do for you...". He put the globe in the Christmas tree and saw his father's reflection whispering: "I am proud of you!".



Blades in the Snow:

Defenders of a Wintry Kingdom

Stoica Cosmin-Constantin

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In the heart of a wintry kingdom, nestled between snow-laden mountains, stood an ancient castle. Its towers, adorned with icicles that glittered in the moonlight, marked a place where magic and tradition intertwined. On this fateful Christmas Eve, a shadow loomed over the castle, threatening to extinguish the very essence of the season. The castle, known for its timeless celebrations, hosted a grand feast on this night. However, beneath the laughter and the warmth of the hearths, an age-old curse stirred. A malevolent force, long forgotten, sought to drain the castle of its festive enchantment. The very magic that had sustained the castle for generations was now at risk.

In the hidden recesses of the fortress, a diverse group of individuals, each possessing unique skills, gathered in secrecy. A mysterious figure, shrouded in a cloak of silver and shadows, revealed that the curse could only be broken by unraveling the threads of unity that bound the castle's festivities together. As the clock struck midnight, signaling the arrival of Christmas, a chilling wind swept through the halls. The laughter died down, and the air grew heavy with an unspoken dread. The shadow of the curse manifested itself in the form of icy tendrils that crept along the walls, threatening to snuff out the radiant glow that had illuminated the castle on countless festive nights. In the castle's library, illuminated by the soft glow of ancient tomes, the group discovered a forgotten manuscript. Its brittle pages whispered secrets of an era when the curse's origins were intertwined with a tale of star-crossed love. The caretaker of relics delicately handled the manuscript, revealing a poignant story that echoed through the cor-

ridors of time. This revelation fueled the heroes' determination, for they now understood that breaking the curse required not only unity but a reclaiming of the castle's lost stories. Armed with newfound knowledge, they ventured forth, the weight of untold histories guiding their steps

The group of unlikely heroes, comprised of a silent observer, a skilled artisan, a storyteller, and a caretaker of forgotten relics, embarked on a quest to decipher the cryptic clues left by the ancient curse. Together, they traversed secret passages and hidden chambers, seeking the key to unlocking the castle's magic. In their journey, the heroes encountered enchanted beings that guarded the castle's secrets. A spectral guardian, the embodiment of forgotten memories, challenged them to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. A mystical creature, half-frozen in time, spoke in riddles that revealed the necessity of embracing the past to ensure the future. As the heroes progressed, they realized that the curse thrived on the discord sown among the castle's inhabitants. The celebration's magic relied on the unity of hearts, a force more potent than any enchantment. The artisan crafted a magnificent tapestry that depicted the intertwining lives of the castle's denizens, emphasizing the importance of connection and shared joy.

The storyteller, with words as ancient as the castle itself, wove tales of kindness and generosity. The caretaker of relics revealed an artifact of forgotten traditions—a relic that, when activated, resonated with the castle's magic and pulsed with the warmth of memories long past. With the pieces of the puzzle falling into place, the heroes gathered the castle's residents and presented their findings. The silent observer, now a conduit of shared understanding, communicated the urgency of unity in the face of the looming curse. And so, as the clock approached the final chime of midnight, the castle's inhabitants joined hands. The tapestry, the tales, and the relic converged, creating a surge of communal spirit that repelled the icy tendrils of the curse. The castle's magic roared to life, brighter and more resilient than ever.

As the first rays of Christmas morning illuminated the castle, the heroes looked upon the transformed fortress. The once-threatened magic now thrived, eternally preserved in the unity of those who had almost lost Christmas. The silent observer, now revealed as the embodiment of the castle's spirit, nodded in approval. The heroes, though nameless, became the living legends of a Christmas tale told for generations—a story of resilience, unity, and the enduring magic that could only be found in the hearts of those who celebrated together.



Caradință Amalia Gabriela

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A little girl named Lily lived in a quaint town adorned with twinkling lights and festive decorations. Lily's days were filled with laughter and joy, but her heart longed for a companion. That longing was soon answered one snowy Christmas Eve when a small, shivering puppy appeared on her doorstep.

With eyes as wide as ornaments, Lily opened the front door to find a furry bundle of warmth and love. She named the puppy Snowflake because of the way its fur glistened like freshly fallen snow. From that moment on, their friendship blossomed like a winter flower. As the days led up to Christmas, Lily and Snowflake shared countless adventures and enjoyed a lot their time together. They built big or small snowmen in the backyard, their laughter echoing through the crisp air. Snowflake, with boundless energy, would chase tiny snowflakes as they fell from the sky, and Lily would join in, her giggles harmonising with the loud barks.

One chilly afternoon, Lily and Snowflake ventured into the heart of the enchanted forest near their home. Trees adorned with icicles stood tall like guardians of a winter wonderland. Lily's breath formed delicate clouds in the air as she and Snowflake explored the magic within the woods. They stumbled upon a clearing where a group of woodland creatures, drawn by the warmth of friendship, gathered to celebrate. Squirrels, rabbits, and even a wise old owl joined in the festivities, creating a spectacle of joy and unity. Lily and Snowflake danced around the clearing, being welcomed by those creatures into their circle of merriment.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting hues of pink and orange across the snowy landscape, Lily and Snowflake discovered a hidden treasure—a glimmering sleigh tucked beneath a snow-covered tree. With wide-eyed wonder, Lily realised it was Santa's sleigh, which had to be prepared before the big night.

The woodland creatures explained that Santa's reindeer needed a bit of rest, and they had been entrusted to keep an eye on the sleigh. Lily and Snowflake, fuelled by a newfound excitement, offered to help prepare for Santa's departure. Together, they adorned the sleigh with twinkling lights and wrapped presents in festive paper. With everything in place, the woodland creatures gathered around Lily and Snowflake. In a magical moment, they bestowed upon them a gift—a golden bell that echoed with the spirit of Christmas. Lily's eyes sparkled with

gratitude, and Snowflake wagged its tail in delight.

As the clock struck midnight, the sleigh rose into the starlit sky, guided by Lily's unwavering belief in the magic of Christmas. With Snowflake by her side, they watched in awe as Santa and his reindeer soared into the night, spreading joy and enchantment to the world.

In the glow of the moonlight, Lily and Snowflake returned home, hand in paw, their hearts brimming with the warmth of friendship and the magic of the season. Thus, in the embrace of Christmas, Lily and Snowflake discovered that the greatest gift of all was the love they shared.

The old mansion

Cercel Laura

clasa a XII-a, Colegiul Național "Garabet Ibrăileanu" Iași, prof. coordonator Ilaș Carmen Florina



In the small town of Everwood, winter was more than just a season; it was a time when the past whispered through the icy winds, and memories lay buried beneath layers of snow. At the heart of the town there stood an old mansion, abandoned and forgotten, its windows boarded up against the biting chill. Rumors of lost love and tragic tales surrounded the mansion like a haunting melody.

Amelia, a young woman with a penchant for unraveling mysteries, couldn't resist the allure of the old mansion. Intrigued by the stories that swirled through the town, she decided to uncover the secrets that lay dormant within its decaying walls.

One frigid afternoon, as the first snowflakes began to descend from the slate-gray sky, Amelia approached the mansion's creaking gate. The air was thick with anticipation, and the crunch of snow beneath her boots echoed in the stillness. With each step, she felt the weight of history pressing upon her. Inside the mansion, she discovered forgotten letters and sepia-toned photographs that told the tale of a love torn apart by circumstance. The story unfolded like a melancholic symphony, painting a picture of a forbidden love between Eleanor, the daughter of the mansion's owner, and Thomas, a humble artist from the town. Their love blossomed secretly in the shadowy corners of the mansion, fueled by stolen glances and hushed conversations. However, the rigid societal norms of the time sought to extinguish their flame. Eleanor's father, a stern and unforgiving man, discovered their secret and banished Thomas from Everwood, leaving Eleanor heartbro-

ken and alone.

As Amelia delved deeper into the past, she uncovered a letter that Thomas had penned to Eleanor on the night of his departure. The words dripped with longing and despair, a desperate plea for understanding and forgiveness. It was a letter never delivered, lost in the currents of time.

Driven by a desire to right the wrongs of the past, Amelia embarked on a mission to reunite the lost lovers, even if only in spirit. With the help of the townspeople, she organized a winter festival at the mansion, inviting everyone to witness the unveiling of the forgotten tale. On the night of the festival, the mansion, once silent and forsaken, came alive with the glow of lanterns and the murmur of a gathering crowd. As snowflakes danced in the air, Amelia stood before the mansion and read aloud Thomas's letter, letting the words weave through the frozen landscape.

At that moment, something extraordinary happened. The air seemed to shimmer with the energy of a love rekindled. A soft whisper echoed through the crowd, and the temperature dropped just enough to create a spectral mist. Some swore they saw the faint outline of two figures, hand in hand, walking through the snow.

Amelia, her eyes glistening with tears, felt a sense of fulfillment as if she had played a part in rewriting a tragic tale. The town of Everwood, now touched by the magic of reconciliation, embraced the winter night with a newfound warmth that transcended the chill in the air.

And so, as the snow continued to fall, covering the town and the old mansion in a blanket of white, the spirits of Eleanor and Thomas found solace in the knowledge that their love had not been forgotten. The winter night, once haunted by the echoes of the past, now held the promise of redemption and the beauty of a love that had defied the cold embrace of time.

A wonderful journey

Urzică Maria

clasa a XI-a, Liceul cu Program Sportiv Iași, prof. Mihaela Onuță



I went to Switzerland with some friends to spend the winter holidays in the Alps. We flew to Bern, and then took the train and went down to Zermatt, a resort located at the base of the mountains, in a dream landscape. When I entered the hotel, I noticed that the Christmas tree was placed in the main hall, and carols could

be heard in the background, which seemed to me like the voices of angels.

From the rooms, we could see the beautiful picture outlined by snow-covered mountains, which represented the perfect image of a fairytale winter. Later, we made a campfire in the front yard of the hotel and sang carols, and the sky accompanied us, in gorgeous shades of orange, purple and yellow, which illuminated the immaculate mountains.

The next day, we started to climb the mountain, but not very much, because there were both the risks of avalanche and low temperatures, as we advanced. The sun lit up the sky like an ice lamp even if it was hidden among the clouds. After a few minutes, we stopped at a crossroad for a rest. The guide wanted us to split up to find out which way is safer, so me and three more friends took it to the left, and the others to the right. After a good few minutes of walking, we stopped because we spotted a lake that looked quite dubious, because it was quite dark in color, plus there was no indicator. My friends wanted us to go back, but I told them to see what's further. Suddenly, an old woman comes to us and asks if we can help her. My friends got scared and ran back to go the other way. Left alone, I started to listen to the old woman. She told me that she wanted me to take a cornflower from the forest, which is quite rare. I accepted the challenge and started looking for the flower, climbing the mountain. I looked for it for hours, but I didn't find it. Dissapointed, I sat down on a tree trunk, thinking of a solution. I said in my mind: <This old woman may really need a flower, but what can I do now? I didn't find</p> anything and I got lost!>> At one point, I heard a noise from the forest and I hid behind a tree in fear. In front of me was a bear who asked me what I was doing there. I told him that I was trying to find a cornflower, but all the effort was in vain. Smiling, the bear told me that he would help me find what I was looking for. After climbing higher, we managed to find the flower and picked one, but we had to sleep there, because it was dark. The next day, I saw that the path was covered with snow, so it was dangerous. Instead, the bear came up with the saving idea of going down the mountain quickly and safely. He found a tree trunk that he checked, then he said that we are ready to go. Using the trunk as a sleigh, we managed to save time and also got down safely. After reaching the lake, I said goodbye to the bear and, as a sign of thanks for the help offered, I gave him all the bags of blackberries I gathered during the climb. I gave the flower to the old woman and she thanked me, with an unspeakable happiness on her face. She tore off the petals of the flower and threw them into the lake. In a few seconds, the dirty and strange water of the lake turned a wonderful color of royal blue, and the old hut turned into a spectacular silver castle, as if taken out of the fairy tales. But the magic did not end there. The scary and doubtful old woman became a wonderful lady, dressed in the most beautiful clothes.

She told me that her name is the Princess of the Alps, and that she became an old woman because a wizard cursed her, after she didn't help him to conquer a more distant land. She told that I am a person with a good soul, because I didn't judge a book by its cover. She also told me to tell her a wish, and it will come true. Without hesitation, I told her that I wanted to spend Christmas with my family, because I realized that friends leave you when it's harder, but your family is

with you regardless of situation. The princess told me to wait a little, and after some time she arrived in a sleigh, with my parents. They they were impressed by the landscape and were very happy to see me. Instead of going down to the hotel, we spent the winter holidays at the castle, in a festive atmosphere and in a dreamy landscape, experiencing the joy of Christmas with all our hearts.

Christmas memories

Bîrleanu Rareş-Andrei

clasa a IX-a, Liceul Teoretic "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Iași, prof. coordonator Doboș Diana



Once upon a time in a faraway village there was this little girl named Emma. Christmas was approaching and Emma could barely hold her excitement. This was her favorite holiday seeing the Christmas tree wearing sparkling lights in between branches and globes spreading some colorful lights. Oh, or the sweet hot cup of chocolate that we all get to warm us up. But her favorite parts were the presents. And no, I am not talking about the toy itself. She always loves to find the presents under the tree and to guess by its shape what it is. That was her favorite part about all of this.

Emma's family has a special tradition of decorating the tree with handmade ornaments or from the old generation placing them carefully on the branches. It's very interesting how attached are they to these ornaments for knowing what memory it holds. For example, the red globe with white sparkling flakes reminds them about the moment when they made pancakes and one of them got stuck on the ceiling. Such good times. The moment the tree is ready they sit next to it on the couch and drink hot chocolate with the scent of pine in the whole room.

One day when Emma was helping her mother cleaning before the holidays she stumbled upon an old and odd-looking box covered in dust hidden in the attic. Out of curiosity she took it to her room without saying a word and looked at it. In the right corner you could see that the box was really old by the damage it had and in the center were the letters WW. She didn't know what it meant so she opened the box slowly and looked inside.

In the box was a necklace with a tiny thin book that looked like a journal. The necklace, in a heart-shaped form, had the initials Z.L., which stood for Zelda Lee, her grandmother. Opening the book, she realized that WW was standing for the 2nd World War that her grandfather was in and that it was his journal. Fascinated, she started reading everything he wrote down during that war till her moth-

er busted in to ask her if she saw the box in the attic.

Emma immediately said she is sorry for taking it, but her mother came closer, hugged her and told her that grandfather's journal was the last thing she got from him before he died even though Emma didn't know that he isn't belong them anymore. Emma said that she understands everything now and why he wasn't visiting them as he used to.

Her mother got the necklace and told Emma that she wanted her to have it and promised that she wouldn't lose it. With the promise made, both of them hugged again and went back downstairs to cheer them up a bit before the Christmas Eye.



Cuprins

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Emperor Gulliver from Gullivescu
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