

Use Your Imagination

The Winners of Our Story-Writing Competition



Alza vouchers worth CZK 1000

“Weep Not For The Past” by Barbora Potocká

Gymnázium Havlíčkův Brod

Elise breathes on her gloved hands in a vain attempt to warm them. The dark, intimidating mass of the stadium towers above her – a memento of the past, humanity’s rebellious gesture against the inescapable tide of time, all empty and forgotten now.

Look on our works, ye mighty, and despair, thinks Elise, pulling the woollen scarf around her neck tighter.

She’ll have to do without the fine poetry, though. She has a mission to carry out. The phrase makes her lips twitch in amusement; it brings back memories of childhood games. But she shakes her head with a sigh. She can’t afford to dwell on the past, to be distracted. Not today. Her bones aren’t creaking just yet, but she’s still far too old to waste time.

Charlotte, her little girl, is here somewhere, she’s sure of it. The explosions earlier must have scared her, sending her running.

As Elise enters the stadium, stepping over the heaps of rubble, she spots dirty tracks leading to a door left ajar. One hand pushes the door open; the other finds the comforting bulk of the gun in her coat pocket.

Better safe than sorry. She’s seen far too often how merciless this new world is.

The door leads into a dark hallway. The stench of unwashed socks lingers in the air; another relict of times long past. Elise switches on her head-mounted flashlight – and a soft whimper catches her attention. It’s coming from a corner where various pieces of furniture lie, haphazardly thrown atop each other.

She cautiously takes a few steps forward, wary of what she might find – until she sees Charlotte, curled up behind an overturned table, and relief floods through her.

“Shh, darling, come out. It’s alright. It’s me,” Elise coos and, ignoring the pain in her knees, squats to see her girl up close. Scared eyes stare back at her, but after a few minutes of soft whispering, Elise is victorious, holding her darling’s small form in her arms.

“What would I do if I didn’t have you?” she murmurs quietly, and kisses the top of Charlotte’s head. She sets her down and together, they leave the silent, monstrous building.

The pair walk onwards under the grey-clad sky; an old woman and a dog, ash crunching softly beneath their steps.

BRIDGE COMMENT

A lovely post-apocalyptic tale about loneliness and companionship.

“Deletrius Momenum” by Františka Jirásková

VOŠ a SPŠG Hellichova, Praha

The philosopher in his light robe and the curly-haired blonde girl stood in front of a herd of strange creatures. The little girl was scared, but impressed too. “They’re called Deletriuses,” the philosopher explained.

“Why haven’t I seen them before?” she asked.

“Even if you wanted to, you couldn’t. They are invisible. Their body is more permeable than fog, so you can’t even feel them. You’re scared?”

“Shouldn’t I be?” she said with respect in her voice.

“You know, I appreciate your honesty. I’m scared too. Who wouldn’t be scared of time?”

“So, that’s why they have a clock instead of a head?”

“It’s the main thing that gives them their power. Every human has one of these animals. Even you.”

He pointed to a Deletrius standing at the back of the herd. One of the smallest of all, with an even littler one snuggling up against it.

“The size of your Deletrius depends on how much time you have. If you have a lot of time with small sections for work or plans, it’ll produce small Deletriuses which are called Limits. They care about the things you have to do. These little creatures are very playful, but also mischievous – and if they’re in a good mood, they can mess up all your plans, so you don’t do anything or you don’t know what to do first.”

“In a good mood?” asked the girl.

“They want to have some fun. With all the stress you have, they need some amusement.”

“And what do Deletriuses do?” The girl looked again at her Deletrius.

“They dig holes and hide things inside. Then when you grow up, you forget about the things you’ve done.”

“So if I forget something, it’s because a Deletrius dug a hole and put the memory in?”

“Right. The depth and hiding of the hole depends on your behaviour. If you’re awful, angry, selfish and stingy, they dig deeper and hide the hole more cleverly, so you might never find your memories ever again,” said the man, as he looked at them. “It’s our punishment.”

“So if I understand correctly, people who aren’t good lose their happy memories?”

“And also the bad memories, so they can’t even regret how they’ve acted,” the philosopher said.

For a moment, the little girl felt regret for such people.

BRIDGE COMMENT

We loved this funny little fable that explains why we forget things. Those pesky Deletriuses!

“Clocks Are Good Servants but Bad Masters” by Aneta Pykalová

Gymnázium Opatov, Praha

Ding dong!

“Oh no!” cried Brocol as his alarm clock started ringing. It was morning and school was waiting. “What the...? It’s not a holiday today? Kill me!”

Brocol was asocial, and school was the thing he hated the most. Sitting quietly and pretending an interest in a teacher’s boring lecture, he thought, was really not the ideal way to spend one’s teenage days. He just wanted to read another book about snails. And another, and another... It was probably some kind of addiction.

His anger rose and the blood rushed to his head.

“I hate you, and I always will!” he mocked madly, then with a special samurai move he destroyed his biggest enemy – the alarm clock.

Suddenly something really strange happened. A circular black hole appeared under his feet, and he fell into it. “Can this get any worse?! I hate my life...” he said when he saw the terrifying place he had got to. He had become the prisoner of time, locked in an enormous hourglass! He started thinking about a song for his funeral.

After a while a really unusual monster appeared from nowhere. Brocol had never seen anything so terrible. The gorgon’s body was built from various gadgets, and a creepy *tick, tock* sounded with every step.

“This morning you hit my baby. Now you will taste my revenge!” shouted the weird creature in a croaky voice.

“W-what?! What the heck? Who are you?” asked the surprised Brocol.

“My name is Casio, and my stomach is your new home!” answered the clockmonster.

“B-b-but believe me, you don’t want to eat me... I’m the son of the prime minister. All folks say that my whole family is disgusting!”

“I don’t really care. I don’t have a tongue. So I can’t taste anything at all, sweetie,” answered Casio with a frightening smile – and it opened its iron mouth...

And that, dear readers, is how everybody who doesn’t respect clocks will end.

BRIDGE COMMENT

Casio the clockmonster has no sense of taste and so is happy to eat even the most disgusting children in this very funny fable.

“Lonely Stormy Nights” by Zuzana Soukupová

SPŠ stavební, Pardubice

I look at the deserted streets covered in their thin layer of white dust. Sometimes I let myself wonder what it would be like to have summer again. To feel the warm sun on my bare skin. To see children playing outside, birds singing, a cloudless sky above my head.

Lassie’s whines wake me from my daydream. Tail tucked between her legs, she looks up at the sky and back at me. I too look up, and frown at the ashen clouds hanging close to the ground. A distant rumble makes me move again, and we scour the little town for shelter.

We settle in a church, its massive walls promising protection

from the storm raging outside. In the little time we had, I managed to gather some wood; at least we won’t freeze to death

during the night. The crackling fire has lulled Lassie into a peaceful slumber, so I’m left alone, drinking. I can almost see the disgusted look on my father’s face, that look he gave me the last time I saw him.

“You’re such a disappointment,” he scolded me when I got home that morning. I hated him. Him and those stupid beliefs he tried to feed to me. That was when I turned my back on him and

shut the door in his face, cursing both him and his religion together.

“Who’s a disappointment now father? At least I am still alive!” I throw the empty bottle at the nearest wall.

Lassie, now fully awake, gets up and licks my face, trying to calm me down. While I was having my little tantrum, the fire had died and the storm calmed down. Now the moon shines through the tall windows, illuminating a loft I hadn’t noticed before.

I scramble to my feet and reel towards the stairs leading up. Once at the top, my jaw drops in awe. Lassie watches me

warily from a distance as I sit down on the chair in front of the console.

“You know,” I say, pressing few dusty keys and listening to the rich

sound blowing from the pipes, “I used to play a little.”

Tears threaten to spill as I remember all the days I used to spend with my father in the empty church.

“Well, a lot.”

So I play, long into the night. For Lassie, for my father, and for all the people who have lost their lives in the stormy nights of this nuclear winter.

BRIDGE COMMENT

Another post-apocalyptic tale with a lot to say about love and loss and anger.

“The Beauty of Time” by Lucie Marková

Gymnázium Písek

What a beautiful place this used to be. An impressive monument. Now it’s in ruins. Little snowflakes fall around me and mix with the pieces of glass lying on the ground. Faint winter sunlight shines through the holes in the broken roof and illuminates the whole place with a mysterious glow. I turn my face towards the sun and let it warm my freezing cheeks. I wonder what this place was like during its

former glory. Tourists taking photographs of every inch of this magnificent building and local children running around. The sound of their laughter fills my head. Oh, Time. Greedy little hoarder. He steals everything he lays his lustful eyes upon. His only reason to exist is to take. He can take lives. He can even take your breath away. That little rascal. He doesn’t even care what he takes. You can

have something in your possession for days, months, years, even lifetimes, then before you realize it, it’s gone.

I open my eyes and look at the ground. Something is glimmering next to my foot. I bend my stiff back and pick it up. It’s an old silver locket. I open it and look inside. There’s a photo of a young woman. She has long, dark hair tucked behind her ear, and her eyes sparkle with glee. A smile

spreads across my face. This place could tell so many stories. And that’s the beauty of it. No matter how much time takes, it can never win.

Because people cling to their memories and they never give up.

I close the locket and let go of the delicate chain. I watch it fall and drop down onto the ground, and before it gets covered by a new layer of snow, I’m already gone.

BRIDGE COMMENT

We were moved by the way this story captured a sense of hope in a place of desolation.