

The Friends of Pueblo City-County Library District
present

13TH ANNUAL

CREATIVE

Writing Contest

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PUEBLO CITY-COUNTY
LIBRARY
Ideas · Imagination · Information



**Winning Stories
2018**

The Friends of Pueblo City-County Library District present

13th Annual Creative Writing Contest

The Friends of Pueblo City-County Library District is pleased to announce the winners of the 13th Annual Creative Writing Contest. Students in grades 3-12 were invited to write a story about this topic: Imagine a giant box is delivered to your front door with your name on it. What's inside the box and what happens when you open it? The story must follow this criteria: The last paragraph of the story must contain this exact phrase: "Who knew this would transform my life forever." Each story must contain the following words anywhere in the story exactly as given (for example "wrinkle" but not "wrinkled"): abruptly, stunned, goosebumps, companion, squash and travel. Any entry not containing the above phrase and all six words underlined was disqualified. There were 116 entries this year!

Entries were judged by Friends of the Library board members Monica Ayala, Evelyn Clayton and Becky Sudduth. Winners received a certificate of achievement, a booklet with the winning stories and a gift certificate to Books Again, the Friends of the Library's used book store.

The Friends wish to thank the many teachers who supported the creative writing experience by having their students enter the contest.

Contest Winners

Elementary School

1 st Place	Dermot McCarthy	Homeschool – Mrs. O’Callaghan
2 nd Place	Emma Velasquez	Prairie Winds Elementary School – Mr. Pacheck
3 rd Place	Kylie Lowman	Prairie Winds Elementary School – Mr. Pacheck

Middle School

1 st Place	McKenzie Ehlers	Sky View Middle School – Ms. Arvizo
2 nd Place	Kat Halley Corona	Sky View Middle School – Ms. Russell
3 rd Place	Mikael Corona	Sky View Middle School – Ms. Arvizo

High School

1 st Place	Brandon Atterberry	Pueblo County High School – Mr. Grossen
2 nd Place	Leah Fadenrecht	Homeschool – Ms. Fadenrecht
3 rd Place	Sterling Suazo	Pueblo County High School – Mr. Grossen

The Special Box

Dermot McCarthy

I had just finished breakfast when I heard the doorbell chime. I went to the front door and opened it. There was an enormous box sitting on my doorstep. It was surprisingly light. I carried it into the house and looked to see to whom it was addressed. I was stunned to read my name, Ethan Setter, on the box. I called my mother saying, "Mom, I got this huge box, and it's addressed to me."

"Who's it from?" she asked.

"I have absolutely no idea. There's no return address."

My mother allowed me to open it while she watched. I opened the box to discover only a calculator. My mother said, "It must be a gift from your math teacher."

I asked, "Can I play inside the box?"

"Yes, I suppose," she said and returned to the kitchen.

I looked at the calculator. It was already on and showed the number 0.1134 in its display.

I tried to determine the significance of this number when I accidentally dropped the calculator. Picking it up, I read "hello" on the upside down screen. I flipped it over and pressed clear. Then I typed in a few random numbers - 1, 6, 2, 1 - and pressed the "=" key. Abruptly I felt dizzy and blacked out.

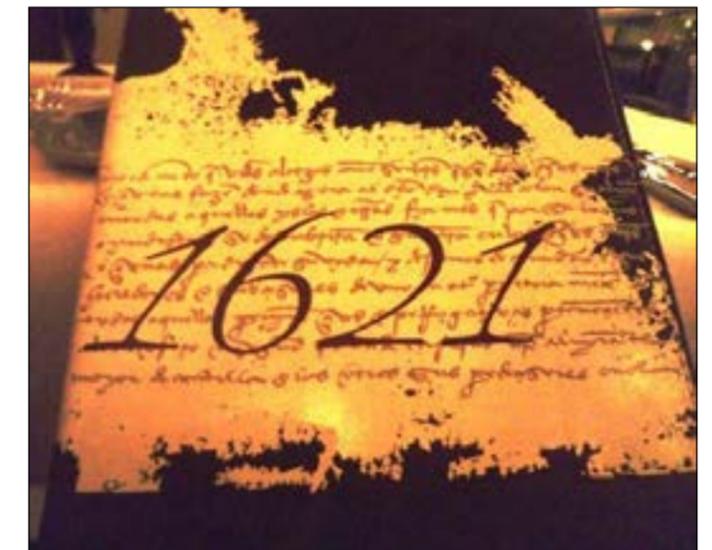
When I came to I studied my surroundings. I was still inside the box. My clothes had changed. Through the open end of the box I could see trees with beautiful fall leaves and a docked ship with white sails. Where was I? Where was my mother?

Stepping outside the box I saw several people dressed like Native Americans and others dressed like the Pilgrims I had learned about in school. The natives were hunting with bows, while the Pilgrims carried muskets. Then it occurred to me that these people weren't actors. They were real. Goosebumps appeared on my arms and neck. I realized what had occurred: time travel! I was in the year 1621, the numbers I had pushed on the calculator. I did not know what to do.

I slowly approached the nearest Pilgrim and spoke to him, "I'm lost, sir. I was playing at the dock and wanted to see the ship. I followed one of the men bringing food aboard for the long voyage. I fell asleep after exploring the cargo hold. When I woke up the ship had sailed. I didn't mean to stowaway. My name's Ethan." He gave me a strange look and said, "I can't say that I can protect you from the captain's wrath, Ethan, but I can invite you to dinner." "That would be great! I'm famished," I replied.

I received more than just any dinner. I received a feast. I sat next to my new companion, whose name was William. On my other side was a young brave named Yellow Hawk. On the table there lay all sorts of different meats, including venison. There were also cranberries, corn, beans, and squash. The meal was delicious. I figured that this had to be the first Thanksgiving.

That night after thanking William for inviting me to the amazing meal, I walked back to the box still near the dock. Inside the box I set the calculator to 2018 and pushed the "=" key. I was safely home. Who knew this would transform my life forever?



My New Job

Emma Velasquez

I just came back from the job interview on Main Street worried and scared. I didn't know if I would get the job, I saw other people there that were trying to get the same job. The job was to take care of cute pets and small, energetic animals.

I didn't hear anything back from them until the second week. I got hired for the job! It was called Animal Home, an orphanage for animals. We had to help animals find a good home with a good family. As I walked in it didn't look like an orphanage, it looked like a house full of pets with brown and white dog beds everywhere and animal houses with food. The smell wasn't pretty, it smelled like wet dogs. Also, you had to watch where you are going or you might run into an animal.

The first day on the job and it was a messy day. The dogs were running away from me, the cats were scratching me, the turtles and fish were swimming away from me very quickly. It seemed like they were doing this only to me, and every single animal did something I didn't like. Also every time I walk in or out I would squish the small slow black beetle squish, squash it goes. Days passed by and I was getting better at it. On my day off my manager called and told me to immediately come to Animal Home. I had goosebumps on the way there.

I got in the car to travel to Animal Home, it was more than three kilometers away. I was stunned about what he needed me to do. I was in a rush so I came in abruptly.

My companion Ella was in the waiting room, I wondered why. Although I was scared, I looked fearless. When I went in his office he nervously said, "I need you to babysit the animals while I'm gone. I'll be back before the big newspaper review." When I came out of the office everyone except my

companion and I were off, Ella came out to help me clean. Ella and I spent the whole day doing what was on the list of chores written on graph paper. Some of the chores were to feed the animals or clean the fish tank. It was sloppy. It took me a few hours of racing around and putting pets back in their cages. The animals were out of control. "I can't do it," I kept telling myself. I was racing to get it done. I was cleaning dog pens, getting food and got very frustrated. Then I noticed a dog named Charlie ran out the door to the vet across the street. I chased him into the restaurant called Chili's and he came out with a bone. At least he got good exercise, I thought but then he ran into the newspaper lady. She got mad and angrily said, "What are you rascals doing here!?" My excuse was I was taking him for a walk and went back to the shop in relief. I still went on doing my chores and by the time I finished my manager was back. Even though the animals were being crazy, I still made it to the end of the day. I was exhausted and that's when I noticed Charlie standing next to me. He just stared and I stared back. All of a sudden Charlie started to speak to me. When I got to each animal I learned something from each one of them, a way to understand them. I could somehow talk to animals!

Who knew this would transform my life forever. From then on I spoke to the animals, I got close to each and every single one of them. I knew how to treat them and they knew how to treat me and not get hurt.

Even if it was as hot as boiling water or if it was raining cats and dogs. Since then I am patient with my furry friends and now I can tell if they are scared, fearless, any emotion.



The Mysterious Box on the Doorstep

Kylie Lowman

"Ahhh," I sighed.

Finally the weekend has arrived, just what the doctor ordered. But as I quickly turned the silver key into the hole, I saw a brown cardboard box at my feet. I was stunned to see it had my name on it. I had no idea who made this travel to our doorstep. I picked it up, stepped inside, sat it on the table, sliced it open, and peered in. What I saw sent chills down my spine, put goosebumps all over my skin. Inside that dark box was a... dog? I curiously picked him up in my hands before he could jump on me, "Why, hello there!"

I ran up the stairs, dog in hands, almost falling down because I was going so fast. "Where did he come from?" Mom questioned. "I don't really know, he was in a box on our doorstep in my name." I replied. "Go grab the laptop, we need to figure this out." Mom demanded. I grabbed the laptop, and then I hopped down the stairs two at a time. Then I slowly put my fingers over the top of the laptop, and pushed it open, then I powered it on, and glanced at the dog. "Here mom, give it a go." I shoved it over to her. She quickly researched, but when she hit enter, the computer showed, "No Results." "Hmm...we've got a mystery on our hands!" I exclaimed. "Wait...look, there's a tag on him." I bent down and studied his tag. "It says that he's from a shelter in Montana, and they want us to take care of him," I read. "I wonder why they sent him to us though," Mom wondered. "I don't know, but this guy is probably starving!"

Woof! The dog barked like he was trying to answer my question, but all that would come out was a woof, woof.

My mom decided she would go to the store, while I kept the puppy company. He started giving me slobbery kisses, and then I giggled. "Hey! I wonder what I should name you," I thought in my head. Right then, Mom came in through the front door, stumbling with all the supplies she bought for the puppy, hoping not to drop them. "Ooooo, I just know he is going to love this stuff," I said in awe. "Yeah, and he'll squash these toys in about two days!" she laughed.

Today I woke up with the new dog abruptly licking my face! He was so cute! Then it came back to me, I need to name him still. I stared at him, then I knew it, Rover.

I took Rover to the park today and he seemed to love it. He bounced around with the ball and one time he actually caught it in mid-air. Eventually I got tired so it was time to head home. So we left, and he was exhausted. He was panting like he ran a marathon or something. When we got home he devoured his food, gulped his water and slowly

trotted over to his little doggie bed where he spinned around until he got comfortable, then plopped down and fell asleep right away.

Rover is a year now and he is the best companion ever. He catches the ball in mid-air all the time. He runs faster than I can. We go to the park every day. He still looks as cute as he was as a puppy. He still wakes me up with slobbery kisses. All you need to know is, a dog is what you need, all you'll ever need. Who knew this would change my life forever.



Artificial Life

McKenzie Ehlers

I stood stunned at the doorway to our house. The box had arrived early in the morning, at around 7 a.m. My brother Louie and I, were sitting on the couch eating waffles and watching the TV, the volume turned low, so we wouldn't wake our parents. When the doorbell rang, Louie and I jumped out of our skin. We stared at each other, each of us wondering the same thing, who could that be at this hour? We both rushed to the door, but Louie beat me to it. He opened the door and stopped abruptly. There was nobody there. At first, I dismissed it as a ding-dong-ditch prank done by your run-of-the-mill friendly neighborhood teenagers, but then I saw it. The box.

It was a rather large box, almost as tall as me, and only one word was written across its front. My name. I backed away from the door, goosebumps on my arms.

"How did this get here?" I asked. Louie shrugged. "Must be some prank." All of a sudden, the box shook violently, as if something inside was trying to get out. I screamed.

"Are you really scared of it?" Louie laughed. "Come on scaredy cat, open it."

I did not want to open that box, but I hated being teased by my older brother. So, I stepped out onto the porch and hesitantly opened the box. I shrieked. Inside the box resided a peculiar looking robotic boy. He stared up at me with a confused look on his face.

"Who-who are y-you," I stuttered. The boy peered at me and cocked his head to the side. Louie came over and looked inside the box.

"Come on, it can't be that ba-," he said, stopping when he saw the boy. "That's it I'm officially going to travel to Rome for college."

"Hello," the boy said in a monotone voice. "I am A.L., Artificial Life, I have been sent to you."

"By who?" I asked. "That, unfortunately, is classified," A.L. responded. "I have come here to be your companion."

"What are you going to do?" I asked worriedly. "I will assist and protect you," A.L. said in that creepy monotone voice. "That's what all A.L. do." "Why were you sent to me?" I asked terrified of this A.L. boy. "That information is classified," A.L. said.

"Everything is," I whispered under my breath. "Well, A.L., I don't need an assistant or a protector, I have my brother and parents. So, would you please go home and tell your creator to send you elsewhere." A.L. didn't say anything. He simply shook his head ominously.

"Why can't you?" I asked. "Classified," A.L. answered. I shuddered. This robot wasn't leaving no matter what, and I had no idea what his, its, intentions were. Reluctantly, I let A.L. into the house.

"Why are you letting that thing in?" Louie screamed as he cowered behind the couch.

"It won't leave!" I screamed back.

"What in the world is going on out here?" Mom asked as she stepped out of my parents' bedroom.

"Why are you to yelling so loud at 7:30 in the morning," Dad yawned.

"There's a robot in our living room, Mom!" Louie yelled.

Mom looked up, startled. "Where?" "It's right next to me," I said.

Mom looked straight at A.L., but she seemed to look right through him.

"You children better stop making all this racket, there is absolutely nothing there. Now if you don't mind I'm going back to bed!" Mom screeched.

Mom and Dad returned to their bedroom and Louie and I were left shocked and alone with a strange robot.

"They can't see it," Louie said, flabbergasted.

"You don't say," I replied angrily. "Now what are we going to do about A.L.?"

"That's his name?" Louie looked dumbfounded.

"My name stands for Artificial Life," A.L. said, glaring at Louie.

I knew Louie was terrified, and it only proved my theory completely when he backed away from the couch and ran to his room.

"Now," A.L. said. "Let's get down to business, shall we?" "What do you mean?" I wondered out loud.

"I used to be a child like you," A.L. said. "My name was Gavin, and one day I got a box at my door with my name on it. Inside, there was a little robotic girl who called herself A.L., but her real name was Diane. She turned me into a robot, and I now work for The Boss, turning more children into robots to be part of his robot army. He made a special formula for us to drink so adults can't see us."

"But why kids?" I asked, as I slowly backed away from A.L. Gavin.

Gavin scoffed. "The government, policemen, firemen, the military, all adults. If The Boss used adults for his army, he would be arrested faster than you could say the ABC's. However, since adults can't see us, The Boss is safe. No one

will believe kids when they say a robot is trying to turn them into one. I'm sorry, but I've talked too much. It is time for you to be made into one of us forever."

"No!" I screamed, lunging for Gavin.

He stepped aside and I face planted into the carpet. I picked myself up and ran into the garage.

"You can't escape!" Gavin screamed in that horrible monotone voice of his.

I searched and scavenged in the garage, pulling boxes down and throwing things off shelves. I prayed neither Mom nor Dad would hear and make me stop. I finally found it, Dad's large sledgehammer which weighed about a hundred pounds. I dragged it across the floor, heading for the garage door, but Gavin stopped me.

"What do you think you're doing?" he asked.

"I'm going to squash you," I yelled back, desperately trying to raise the heavy hammer.

Oh no, I thought. I couldn't lift the sledgehammer.

A.L. Gavin grinned evilly.

"Guess it's over for you," he laughed maniacally.

I screamed, hoping to alert someone, anyone, even my parents who would see nothing but a messy garage and their

daughter screaming in the middle of it. Suddenly, the garage door burst open, and Louie stepped in holding Dad's regular hammer.

"No," Gavin gasped.

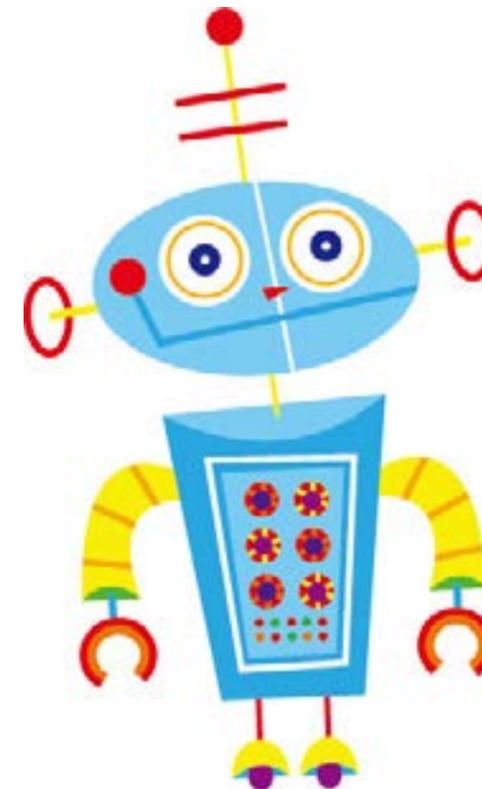
"Oh, yes," Louie replied. "No one turns my sister into a robot you jerk. Louie swung the hammer and struck A.L. on his artificial shoulder. Gavin backed away, clutching the dented metal where Louie had hit him.

"I'll get you now!" he screamed. "The Boss isn't really particular on the ages of his children, you both shall do nicely."

He ran at me shrieking loudly and monotonously. I didn't scream, I cried. I knew (thought) that I was going to be a robot and could never see my parents or Louie, go to school, or hang out with my friends ever again. At the last second, Louie jumped in between Gavin and I and was immediately knocked to the floor. He stood up and held Gavin's struggling robot body until he calmed down. Louie reached under Gavin's head and pulled a switch.

"Gavin's gone," Louie said.

I nodded. Who knew this would transform my life forever.



The Ketri

Kat Halley Corona

It all started when I was walking home. As I was walking, I saw a mysterious truck pulling into our driveway. It looked like a UPS delivery van, but it had another marking on the side, a cross of waving snakes and the number 13 over it.

Goosebumps crawled up my arms. I couldn't look away from the sight. I had been slowing down without realizing it, and now, only a quarter of the way to my house, I stopped.

Just then, a man got out of the van. I couldn't see him very well, but he was carrying a person-sized box. It shocked me that he could lift it. The man gently lowered the box to the floor of the porch, near our decorative squash. He jogged back to the strange truck and pulled out of the driveway.

I shook myself out of my daze and dashed into the house, dumping my backpack and grabbing a pair of scissors from the kitchen to cut open the box.

Yanking open the door, I rushed out, to the vast box. As I read the shipping address, I was shocked to see my name as the recipient. Using the scissors, I got ready to cut the tape, but I abruptly ground to a halt.

I was unsure of what was in the box, and so I was scared of what I might find within. What, I told myself, if it's a bomb or something? I might get injured or killed!

I decided to open the box. Using the scissors, I cut the tape and opened the box. After ripping through a ridiculous amount of packing material, I found a round disk, about as big as a pizza, but twice as thick. It looked like a giant coin without any details.

As my fingers touched the disk, however, I was stunned to see all the packing material lifting up from the ground and the box. It started to swirl in a tornado around me. Desperate, I tried to take my fingers off the disk, but it was like they were fused to it.

As the tornado of Styrofoam swirled higher and higher around me, I began to spin as well. I frantically began to try to shred the storm wall, but I couldn't. Every time my hand went into it, the tornado just parted around me.

Everything started to swirl faster and faster, reaching a fever pitch, and all I could see was a whirl of mint green and white.

I awoke to find myself in the middle of a strange place, packing material strewn around me on the grass. I sat up and looked around, but all I could see was more grass. I gasped; the grass was not normal, rather, its color was ranging from pastels to darker hues.

I scrambled to my feet, only to find myself looking down on a terrifying creature. Before I could step on it, I realized that the strange beast was, in fact, a golden squirrel. It was literally glittering in the sunlight and was about the size of a small cat.

"What the?" asked the squirrel. "How on earth did you get so big? And why are you gold?"

I stretched a cautious hand out to the squirrel, who chattered in reply before nuzzling its head into my hand. Its head was surprisingly warm, and it didn't feel like metal at all.

My new companion began to scurry away, stopping and looking back at me, wanting me to follow.

I followed the flashy animal. She was very easy to see, and since we were in an endless grassland, there were no shadows. The squirrel led me far away from where I had originally awoke. My feet were hurting, but I thought that the squirrel might be able to show me how to get back home.

Finally, she stopped. Lying in the grass was the same metal disk that had taken me to this place. Filled with trepidation, I picked up the disk. Nothing happened.

"Aaaaaaaa!" I bellowed, furious. "Take! Me! Home!" I chucked the disk to the ground before stomping on it, screaming the whole time. My squirrel friend simply watched.

Resigned to being stuck here, I grabbed the disk, deciding to take it with me. I hadn't noticed, but for something so large, it was surprisingly lightweight. My squirrel friend had moved off in another direction and was waiting for me. I followed her, trusting.

When we stopped, we were at the top of a hill, which was strange because the grassland was almost entirely flat. The squirrel made an odd noise in the back of her throat. It was an odd, metallic sounding noise, and the only indication from her that I had seen that showed she was not a regular squirrel besides being giant and golden.

As soon as she made the noise, the entire hillside started sinking into the hillside with a loud grinding noise. I gasped and wobbled back and forth on my feet, unsteady.

As the hillside got lower, I was able to see what looked like a lab filled with squirrels just like the one I had found. From the looks of things, the squirrels were operating the room. They had all stopped, however, when they saw us.

I stared, shocked. I didn't know how this was possible, but I didn't have time to ponder the question, for one squirrel

approached me. It handed me a scroll, which I opened hastily and read:

"Human: For you to have come here, you must have opened a box containing a metal disk. The disk isn't why you were brought here. The box is, and was, planted by a human group to bring you here.

We, of the Order of the Ketri, are bound to warn and save humans such as yourself from being lost here, in Khalitana. When holding the disk, if you say the word Khalitana, you will be transported back here. Other times, if we need you, your disk will glow a bright blue.

It is our job to ensure that humans who travel to our realm leave here as Khalitans, who help us to eradicate the threat of the Mysterioso, despicable human cult. You, a survivor, are now a Khalitan.

You will be sent home, but make sure that you warn others of the danger of the Mysterioso. They are trying to send all humans to other realms, but their reasons are unknown. You will help us discover those reasons. Goodbye, human."

In another whirl of color, this time gold and black, I found myself standing on the porch once more, scroll clutched tightly in my hand. Strangely, everything looked exactly the same as it had when I left.

How is this possible? I had discovered a strange, wonderful new world. I was determined to help the squirrels, and so I, double-checking the scroll, wrote down my experiences and had this story published. Who knew this would transform my life forever. When I went back to Khalitana, there were many new Khalitans. Please, please, if you get the box, open it and help the Order of the Ketri. We must defeat the Mysterioso.



Super Nova

Mikael Corona

As I walked home from school one fine day in November, I abruptly stopped; some random person in a black van cut me off and almost hit me.

“Watch where you’re driving! You almost hit me!” I shouted at the person.

Either they didn’t notice or they didn’t care (probably the latter), because they didn’t take any notice of me. I sighed. Some people are just plain jerks. I ran the rest of the way home. When I finally got there, I stopped, stunned. On my doorstep, there was a giant box, about the size of a large doghouse. It had a “This side up” sticker on it, and also a “Fragile, handle with care” sticker on it. I wondered what was in it, and why mom or dad had bought it. As I walked toward the box, I noticed it had no return address and also it had MY name on it. I hadn’t ordered anything recently, so I wondered what the heck could be in it. I thought of all of the stuff that could be in it, like a bomb or maybe a killer robot. Goosebumps popped out on my skin. What was actually in it, I never even considered.

I tried to take the box inside, but it was too heavy. I got a dolly from the garage and dragged the box onto it. I started to wheel it inside on the dolly, but then the box shook a little bit. I leaped backwards, as anyone would if a mysterious box starts to move.

“Who’s there?!” I shouted, “I warn you, I’m armed!”

I wasn’t actually armed at the time, I was just saying it to scare whatever was in the box. When nothing happened, I cautiously approached the box, and wheeled it the rest of the way inside. When I got inside, I grabbed a knife and scissors, and approached the box. I cut it open with the scissors, and then pulled open the flaps, snatched up the knife, and held it out toward the box. When nothing jumped out and clawed my face off, I started to approach it. When I opened it, there was a lot of packing peanuts. I scraped them aside carefully, not wanting to squash the box’s contents. I finished removing the peanuts to reveal...a dog. In the box is a sleeping dog. I thought it was a golden retriever or something. I gently lifted it out of the box, took it outside, and set it on the ground. Then I sat there looking at it. I noticed it had some kind of dart stuck in it. I pulled it out, and realized it was probably a tranquilizer dart. I flicked it away, and started to wonder if it is humane to transport animals via mail. As I was pondering if it was or wasn’t, the dog woke up. I looked down, and the dog was standing up, looking at me like, “Who the heck are

you?” Its eyes were bright and sparkling, with a faint tinge of purple, like a supernova.

“Nova,” I decided, “I’m going to name you Nova.”

Then, the next thing the dog did made me fall out of the chair. It said, “I like that name very much. Thank you, human.”

I looked up at the dog from the ground, hardly able to say anything. A talking dog. OMG. I couldn’t speak. My mind had been blown. My own talking dog. I couldn’t believe it. It was so amazing.

The dog looked at me, evidently puzzled, and said, “Are you having troubles? It looks like you cannot speak. I do hope you are okay, because I would like it if you would be my companion, but if you are unable to answer due to speech impediments, I will have to find another companion, which would be unfortunate for both you and me.”

I managed to gasp out, “That would be great, please.” “Okay,” the dog replied happily.

“Here, come inside, but use the bathroom first, please,” I tell him.

Nova went and relieved himself, and then followed me inside. I looked in the fridge and pulled out some leftover steak. I gave it to Nova, who gobbled it up in like, one second. I could tell he was very hungry. I walked him to my room and showed him my snake and such.

He crawled under my bed and told me, “It is very dusty down here, but I think it would make a good sleeping place for me if you could vacuum it out.”

I went and fetched the vacuum, then took it back to my room and vacuumed out under my bed. A few minutes later, I also removed and hid the box, not wanting them to notice and ask questions. By then, it was pretty late, about eight o’clock. I put on my pajamas, brushed my teeth, and laid back in bed. As I drifted off to sleep, I realized that I wasn’t sneezing, nor did I have hives. I smiled. Nova was special. He must not trigger my allergies.

I had a very bad nightmare about giant, evil packing peanuts trying to eat me whole. I woke up covered in cold sweat. I reached under the bed and felt Nova’s warm body beneath my hand. It was very comforting.

“Nova?” I tell him, “I have had an awful nightmare.” “Oh,” he replied, “I think I can help. “Here, get on my back.”

“Why?” I asked. “Oh, you’ll see. What is your favorite place that you have always wanted to travel to?”

“London,” I told him, “Why?

“Hop on,” was his only reply.

Then, Nova climbed out from under the bed and showed me his back, like he wanted me to climb on. I obliged. Suddenly, in a swirl of light and color, we were flying above London.

“Aaaaahhhhh!” I yelled, thinking we were going to fall and die. But no. Somehow, Nova was flying. “Awesome!” I thought. A talking, flying dog. As I looked over London, I saw the Thames River, Buckingham Palace, and tons of other famous sights.

“This is London, 1843,” Nova told me.

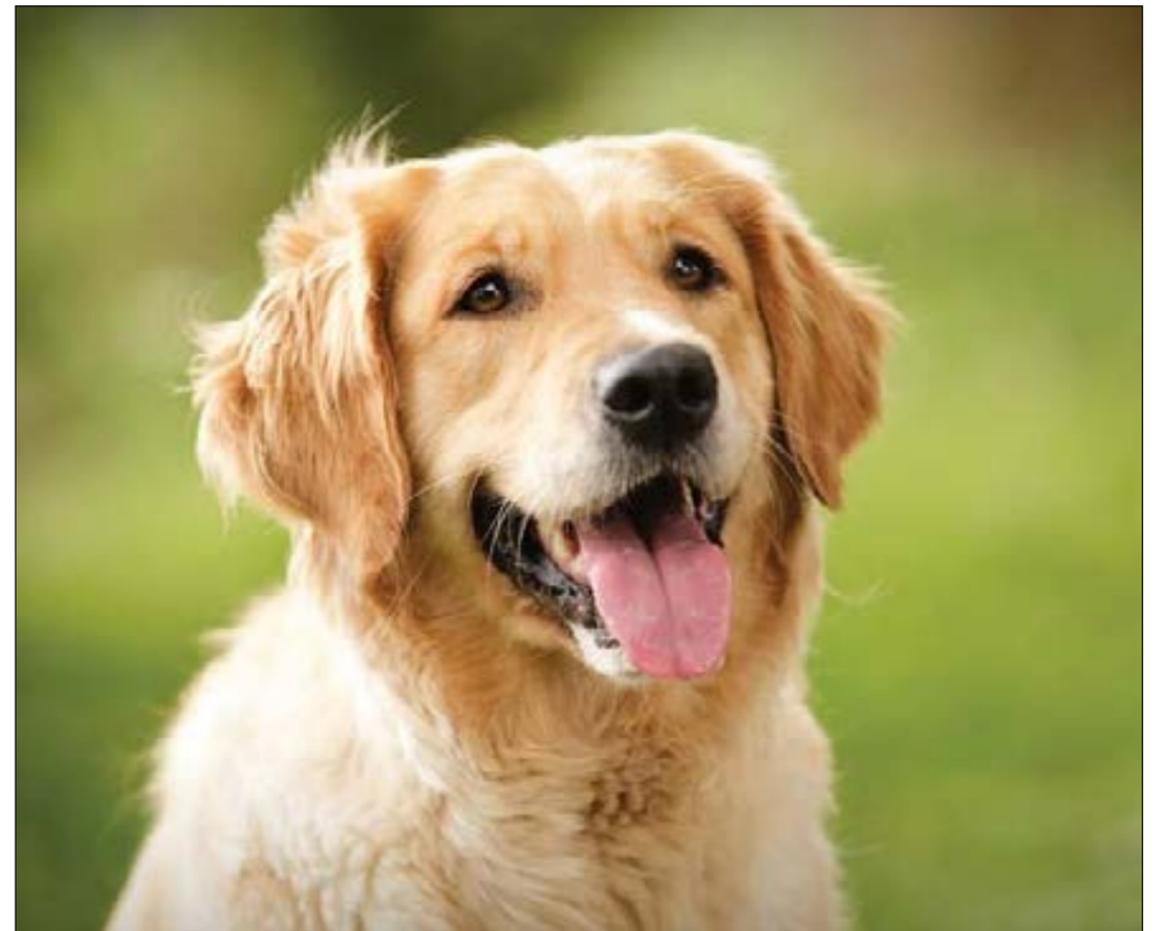
“You can time travel?!” I shouted at him. “Yep,” he said. It was official. Nova was the Best. Dog. Ever!

We spent the rest of the night going to awesome places like Paris in 1436, China in 1201, Pennsylvania on August 2, 1776, Egypt in 346 B.C.E, and even Niagara Falls in 2018. When we finally got home, I was happy and laughing.

“Nova,” I tell him, “You are the most amazing dog ever.”

“Thanks,” he tells me, and then crawls back under the bed and falls asleep.

I laid back in bed and fell asleep. Today and tonight was the best time ever. I have the best dog ever, and a huge box to make an awesome fort out of. Who knew this would change my life forever? Now I can visit anywhere (and any when) I want, and I finally have a dog, which I’ve always wanted. Nova is truly amazing.



The Box at the Door

Brandon Atterberry

I was feeling pretty depressed. I was told by a substitute teacher that my dreams would never come true. My dream is to not only be a firefighter, but to also open a shelter for the homeless and an animal shelter. When we were talking in class about what we wanted to do with our lives, I was told I wasn't capable of opening a shelter. This got me pretty down. I try hard but a lot of times it seems like I can't get ahead especially in school. Even though I struggle, and it would cost a lot of money, I had always figured that it would work out somehow. To have someone, especially a complete stranger, squash my dreams was a real blow to me.

My parents tried to cheer me up but it wasn't really working. After a few days of moping around, I came home from school and there was a giant box with my name on it. The box was plain brown like any box you would get in the mail. There was no return address on the box and nothing to show where it came from. I grabbed the box and I went into the house and set it on the counter. I got busy doing homework and forgot all about it. The next morning I went downstairs to eat waffles for breakfast and I saw the box. I opened the box and inside was another smaller box. This box was gift wrapped. The paper was blue with red polka dots. When I opened the box I saw a small machine. It was red with antennas and a lot of buttons. There was a screen with a knob. There was another machine that looked like a remote. The remote was silver and the size of a TV remote but with only a green button on it. At first I tried to figure it out on my own. I was playing with all the buttons and turning the knobs but nothing was happening. Finally, I looked in the box to see if there were any instructions or explanations on what this thing was. There was a note in the bottom of the box. It was on white paper with fancy writing on it that said this would help make my dreams come true. It also said turn the knob three times to the right to turn on. I couldn't figure out how a machine was going to make my dreams come true but I was curious. Once I did, it made a weird sound and I got goosebumps all over my body.

All of a sudden a person abruptly appeared. He said, "I am your travel companion to the future." I asked him his name and he said, "My name is Kendell. Step into this portal and we will go to the future." I looked behind me and there was a portal that looked like the colors of a galaxy swirling around in it. There was a silver ramp going into it. When we stepped through, I was suddenly stunned with amazement. I saw a whole new world with self-driving cars and solar panels on all the houses and buildings. There was no pollution, you could smell the fresh air. It was beautiful. There were gardens everywhere and everything was green. The people I saw all

seemed to be happy and getting along. The stuff I saw was energy efficient. Then I saw my dream.

There was a tall red building made out of brick and wood. There were fire engines in front and there was a big green park with a big lake and stream. There were two other medium sized buildings. The first building I walked into was the big building with the firetrucks in front. It was my own private fire department that is used to fight wildland fires. There were at least 80 firefighters that worked there. It was also a training place for wildland firefighting. In the back there was a training area where burns could be done and firefighters learned. There were classrooms for classroom training. The second building was the animal shelter. It was shiny. There animals were basically free. There were some cages but they were bigger. Every animal had their own place. There was an indoor and outdoor play area for the animals. The third building was the homeless shelter. There were separate rooms with beds and clothes. The homeless all had jobs at either the fire station or the animal shelter. They also could work as grounds keepers. They could keep their pets in the shelter area. There was a designated area for those pets so they wouldn't get adopted out but they could still interact with the other animals. The homeless got paid and it gave them experience to help get other jobs. Families could stay there and there were separate areas for the families to stay. I knew then the substitute was completely wrong.

When I told Kendell I was ready to go back he told me to press the green button on the remote and it would take me back to my time and my life will be back to normal again.

I pressed the green button and another portal opened up in front of me. I found myself back in my kitchen with a plate full of waffles. No time had passed at all. I looked all over for the time machine but it had disappeared. I knew that even though everything was back to normal, it wouldn't be the same again. I went back to school and worked even harder to make my dream come true. I will never let anyone squash my dreams again. Who knew this would transform my life forever. At first I couldn't figure out seeing the future would make my dreams come true but then I realized that to be able to have a glimpse into my future and better yet to know that my dreams can really come true is a great honor. To know my dreams do come true, makes them real to me now. I don't know why I was chosen to get this gift but I will always be grateful.



The Vision

Leah Fadenrecht

It was just a box. Nothing seemed special about it. Jupiter Ceaser. My name was written in big letters on the top of the large box with no address. The letters were big and fancy. I thought of everybody I knew that lived close enough to me to even take the time to drop it off on my front porch. Or anyone who would drop it off in general. My index finger grazed over the top of the box, trying to find the edge of the tape. It came off. I grasped the flaps of the box carefully, and bit my lip in anticipation. I flipped open one side of the box. I flipped over the other side.

I gasped, stunned.

Now, I don't know how to tell you this without abruptly doing so, so I will just come out and say it.

In the box was a group of seven short - no tiny men. They didn't look menacing in any way at first. One was sniffing loudly. Another was humming alone to the tune of happy birthday. Yet still another was sitting on the floor of the cardboard box, playing tic-tac-toe with himself. As soon as the light hit their faces, they all looked at me in surprise and yelped. Then they stood still. Absolutely still, as though they were pretending to be gnomes or some sort of silly statue. Which was odd, because I had seen them, and heard them.

"Um, hello?" I said.

I suppose I should have been stunned. I suppose I should have had goosebumps of fear all up and down my arms. Or maybe I should have tried to kick the box away in surprise, screaming for help. I did none of this. I simply smiled and waved my hand at them shyly. I must've been crazy.

I am.

The men did nothing for a few long seconds. They were still. They were absolutely still. They were ridiculously still. I had already grown impatient with them. This was a silly game to play. I was just about to tell them so when a young boy, around my age (seventeen) came up to me and... "Oh no!" the boy exclaimed. "You didn't open the box there did you? It wasn't meant for you."

I raised my eyebrow. "Hi. I'm Jupiter ... The name on the box said Jupiter ... " I reached out my hand to shake his. He stared at my hand for a second before shaking his head, as though remembering it was customary to shake another humans hand back.

"I'm very sorry about that. You see, my companion left a box here, and wasn't supposed to leave it here. He was supposed to leave it in the second dimension," he paused a moment. "Wait no, I apologize. I meant to say the second house on the right. This is the first." He hurriedly finished.

"Dimension?" I asked curiously.

The boy looked down at the already open box, to the gnome-like creatures at the bottom and sighed. "I suppose you know too much. You'll have to come along with me."

"Okay?"

He grasped my wrist tightly, only after taping up the box again and picking it up. I blinked rapidly. He pulled me off of my porch, and to the right, leading me into my own backyard. The box he was holding was moving around, the creatures most likely being tossed around as the boy pushed forward quickly.

There was a flash of light over our swimming pool, and then it disappeared, but left behind this terrible screeching noise. As we ran closer I saw that it was a portal of some sort. I had seen enough Sci-Fi movies to know what I was looking at. The boy pulled me closer to the poolside. And pushed me into the pool-portal, following right behind me.

I can't exactly describe to you the way the portal felt. It felt cozy and electrifying. It felt calming and anxiety ridden. It felt like a walk on the early morning beach, and it felt like danger in the middle of a hurricane. It felt the best and worst anything has ever felt.

I landed with a thump on the other side of the portal. I blinked my eyes at what I saw. It was a big forest, but instead of green - as normal forests are - it was blue and pink and yellow. My eyes couldn't take it all in. I felt overwhelmed, like I was sick. The boy, who landed gracefully on his feet behind me, patted my back. "The first time you travel here, it isn't so fun, is it?"

"Where is here?" I asked, "Are we in Narnia?"

The boy laughed and shook his head. "No." He placed the box down. One by one he let the little grown men out of the box. One by one they walked by me. One rubbed its nose, one waved to me, humming happy birthday to himself, one walked by playing Rock, Paper, Scissors with itself.

One even kicked my boots. I had the sudden and overwhelming urge to squash it. I didn't. But I still wished that I could.

Once the boy got all of the little men out, and they had all marched past me, he finally told me what was going on.

Instead of forcing you to hear him drone on and on about how patriotic he is, I'll just shorten it up for you: This land is The Vision. A long time ago, his companion Eric, a mad scientist, had wondered where dreams came from. Specifically, children's dreams, since they tended to be the most creative. When he found out how to make a portal to The Vision, he packed his research and jumped through the portal. He settled down, traveling between worlds quite

often. He found his protege, the boy, Zac, and brought him down to live in The Vision with him. But one time, when Zac and Eric were traveling through dimensions, they heard something behind them. It was a group of the special creatures that lived in The Vision. Try as they might, Zac and Eric could not stop them from coming out the other side of the portal. All of the animals escaped (which explained the gnome-like things). That was two years ago. The two boys - ahem, excuse me - adventurers, recruited other people in the real world to help track down these creatures. They used special code names, such as "companion," and shipped the boxes (with holes of course) to specific pick-up places for

Zac and Eric to grab them. The box that was lying lifeless next to Zac and I as we talked had landed on my doorstep by accident.

"Well then, why did the box say my name?"

Zac pointedly looked at me when I asked, "How else would we make sure no one saw the real destination?"

All I have to say about that day, truly, is, "Who knew that this would transform my life forever." I mean, now I get to be a companion too, picking strange creatures up from all around the world and making a difference to The Vision. It's a dream.



The Amazing Box

Sterling Suazo

It was a nice and cool day, I decided to take a drive to the store to buy some things at about 11 a.m. On the way there I saw billboards of some of my favorite celebrities, such as Tyler Joseph, Josh Dunn, Brendon Urie, Shawn Mendes, and many more singers that I love so much.

Some songs made by some of the people came on the radio. I started thinking out loud, "I wish I could see these people in concert or in person, and maybe meet them."

I went inside the store and did everything that I needed to do and bought what I needed. On my way home, I wanted to look for some instruments, as you may be able to tell, I

love music, I love playing it, I love listening to it, and I love creating it. I walked into the music store, to be more specific, Guitar Center. I truly felt like music was my companion, I walked through the store, and I went towards the ukuleles.

A worker came to me asking, "Anything I could help you with?" I smiled and just replied and laughed, "I'm just looking, I just wish I could afford one of each of these instruments." I continued to look around the store. After that I went to the pet store, I really wanted a dog and cat. I looked around just because I like to waste time.

After some time of walking and looking around I was back in my car about to travel back home. I called one of my best friends, Khloe, as I drove home telling her all the things I wished I could've gotten, and just caught up with her. I pull my car into my driveway and put it in park. I then noticed that it was already 6 p.m. I got out of the car, it was a little chilly outside but not too bad. The slight cool breeze was giving me goosebumps on my arms and legs. I closed my door and locked my car. As I was walking, I abruptly stopped in my tracks. I saw a box that could very easily squash a six-foot person. I stood still for probably about ten minutes.

"What the?" I started asking myself out loud. "What is this?" I was very curious; the box was as big as a school bus. I slowly walked up to it and knocked on it to see if it sounded empty. It wasn't hollow, but I could not put my finger on what could possibly be in a box this big. I went into my house and placed my keys and stuff inside my room. I grabbed an X-Acto knife from the office room and took it outside. I walked up to the box and it had something written on it that I never noticed before. I read it and it said, "To a special friend, Sterling." I was very confused, so I very carefully opened it from the side. As soon as I opened it I was stunned, unable to move, overjoyed, but shocked. What was in it you ask? Well, what was in it was all the things I had wished for today. I was confused thinking this was some kind of magical fantasy, that is, until my best friend walked out of the box.

"I hope you like it!" Khloe screeched at me.

"How did you do all of this?" I questioned her in amazement. Then I saw Brendon Urie, Tyler Joseph, and all of the other celebrities come out and talked to me, I was finally able to meet them.

"I have connections," she shrugged her shoulders and smirked. I laughed and saw the instruments I wanted, and a cat and a dog.

"I am so confused right now, but I am not complaining," I smiled. Then the musicians brought the instruments out and played their music.

"I don't even know how you got everyone and everything so quickly. How did you even do this, this can't be real," I was rambling. "Hey!" She cut me off, "Just enjoy it, you deserve it."

I seriously didn't deserve this, I don't even know how this is real, just something from a book or a movie. We all took a group picture, I felt as if all of us became friends. I was really confused still, of course if I heard someone telling me about this experience I would be very confused as well. I noticed one more thing in the box, I squinted my eyes in confusion, I slowly inched closer. It was another box, a large box, but nothing compared to the huge box. I went up to it and opened it. I know what you're thinking, just get to the point! If you're really wondering what is in the second box, it contained two keys, not one, but two." What are these keys for?" I asked Khloe.

"Oh, oops those are my keys," she laughed embarrassed. She then laughed declaring, "I'm kidding, my uncle was getting rid of his nice new car, so it's yours, and also the other one is for the new house my dad got for you and me to live in."

I have no idea where all this is coming from. How did she have all the money for this, and why is she spending it all now? "Let's just say this is how much I owe you for all the food you've bought for me throughout the years," she joked.

I was overwhelmingly happy, I didn't know what to say. Who knew this would transform my life forever. Suddenly the worst thing ever happened to me, at least at this exact moment seemed to be the worst moment ever. I woke up... it was all just a dream and I was sad, but then remembered, maybe someday, someday these things will happen, not all at once, but eventually. I knew that of course something like this couldn't happen so quickly. I smiled though because I was happy that I had a little memory of the dream, and at least I got to experience that feeling, even if it was a dream. It was just a dream, but a good one, I was sad but also happy. Having Khloe as my best friend in real life was all I could've asked for and that is all that matters.

