
THE ST BEDE'S VOICE

ALL THE NEWS AND CREATIVE WRITING FROM OUR SCHOOL

A POEM TO THE WORLD

Dear World,
Why do you treat Earth so mean, and you think
you're being clean?

Dear World,
Why do you think that us citizens are the
problem, when you're doing the column of
bottles?

Dear World,
Why do we have wars, famine, global warming
& thirst, but you do the damage the most?

Dear World,
Why do you claim that we kill our friends, the
animals, when you hire poachers and you treat
them like lethal cannibals?

Dear World,
Why do some of us be persecuted in the dark,
they don't know what they did, or where they
are?

Dear World,
Why do you think we starve ourselves, and not
donate a single grain, like there is always rain?

Dear World,
Why can't we live in peace and harmony? 'cause
you said: "We can bring love into the world!"
With irony.

By Bruno Kruszyński



**WANT TO GET INVOLVED?
COME ALONG TO A13 ON
THURSDAY LUNCHTIMES.**

WHISPERS AT CAMP RAVENWOOD

CHAPTER 2: THE SCREAM

The first night at Camp Ravenwood felt like a dream - a haunting, unsettling dream that Jessie couldn't quite wake from. The atmosphere was thick with the kind of tension that hung in the air like a dense fog, heavy and unyielding. Dinner was served in the long dining hall, the faint clatter of trays and the hum of murmured conversations the only sounds that filled the space. The food, though hearty and satisfying, lacked the warmth Jessie had hoped for. The rich aroma of stew and roasted potatoes filled her nostrils, but it didn't bring the comfort she expected. It was as though the very air inside the hall was stifled, heavy with secrets that no one dared to voice.

The stone walls of the hall seemed to absorb the sounds, amplifying even the smallest whisper. Jessie glanced around the room, noting the way the other campers spoke in hushed tones, their faces cast in shadow from the dimly lit candles flickering on the tables. At the far end of the room, the staff sat together at a long, shadowed table. Mr. Redgrave, in particular, sat as still as a statue, his dark eyes flicking from one camper to the next, watching quietly as if evaluating something far beyond their understanding. His presence was unnerving - he seemed to blend into the darkness, his sharp features almost lost in the shadows. There was something deeply unsettling about the way he and the other counselors sat, their movements stiff and deliberate, as though they were part of the very walls around them.

As the meal wound down, the campers began to gather their things, exchanging quiet words as they made their way to the door. Jessie felt the coldness

of the stone walls press in on her as she stood up, casting one last glance at Mr. Redgrave. His gaze locked with hers for a moment, his eyes dark and unreadable, before he turned away, and she hurried to catch up with Noah and Mia.

Later, after the evening activities had concluded, the campers huddled around the fire outside, seeking warmth against the chill of the night. The fire crackled, casting long, wavering shadows that danced across the faces of the campers. Their jackets were soaked from the mist that had begun to fall heavier, but the warmth of the flames provided some comfort. The air smelled of wet wood and burning logs, a scent that should have been comforting but only seemed to heighten the sense of unease that Jessie felt.

One of the counselors, a young man with a gravelly voice and a glint of mischief in his eyes, leaned forward and began to speak. "Everyone who's ever stayed here has their own tale of Ravenwood," he said, his voice low and steady, drawing the campers in closer. "The camp is full of ghosts - spirits of those who never left. Some linger because they can't move on, others because they've unfinished business. But all of them have one thing in common: Ravenwood owns them." His eyes flickered to the woods beyond the firelight, as if the shadows themselves were listening. "You might hear their whispers if you listen carefully enough. And sometimes... you might even see them."

Jessie felt a shiver run down her spine, but she

pushed it aside, more intrigued than frightened. She had always loved a good ghost story, and Ravenwood's ominous reputation only fueled her curiosity. Still, she couldn't shake the feeling that the woods - so dark and dense beyond the circle of firelight - were hiding something. A part of her wanted to believe the counselor was simply trying to spook them, to make the night feel more mysterious, but another part of her couldn't quite dismiss the tension in his voice.

Mia, always the thinker, shifted uncomfortably beside Jessie. "Why are the ghosts still here?" she asked, her voice trembling slightly. She glanced over her shoulder, as if expecting something to appear from the dark woods beyond the campfire's reach. "What do they want?"

The counselor tilted his head slightly, his expression becoming more serious. "The spirits of Ravenwood aren't trapped," he explained, his voice taking on a darker edge. "They linger for a reason. Some have unfinished business, others seek revenge. But mark my words - Ravenwood's ghosts don't always wait to be found. Sometimes, they find you."

Mia's fingers tightened around her jacket as she looked into the shadows, her mind clearly racing. Jessie could sense her unease, but she couldn't deny that the idea of Ravenwood's ghosts intrigued her. She loved a good mystery, and this was shaping up to be something far more exciting than the usual campfire tales.

As the night wore on, the campers slowly drifted off to bed, their heads filled with chilling thoughts of the spirits that roamed Ravenwood. Jessie, however, found it difficult to sleep. The rain tapped against the windows of her cabin in a rhythmic pattern that seemed to echo through her mind. She tossed and turned, trying to settle into the unfamiliar bed, but the unease in the air made it impossible. It was as though Ravenwood itself had cast its shadow over her dreams, making the night feel longer, darker, and heavier than any night she had ever experienced.

Her thoughts wandered back to the stories the

counselor had told. Spirits seeking revenge? Unfinished business? Jessie wasn't sure what to believe, but a small, nagging feeling in the pit of her stomach told her that Ravenwood had more than its share of dark secrets. What if some of those secrets were about to come to light?

The night passed slowly, the ticking of the old clock on the wall counting down the hours in the stillness of the cabin. Jessie finally drifted into a restless sleep, only to be awoken by a blood-curdling scream that pierced the silence like a knife through the dark. It was shrill, almost inhuman, and it echoed through the very walls of the cabin, reverberating with a sense of terror that gripped Jessie's heart.

She shot up in bed, her pulse pounding in her ears as the scream continued to reverberate in the distance. Her breath caught in her throat as she glanced across the room to where Mia's bed was. She heard Mia's frantic voice from the other side of the room, trembling with shock and fear.

"Did you hear that?" Mia whispered, her voice barely audible.

Noah was already out of bed, moving swiftly toward the door, pulling on his jacket as he went. "We need to go," he said, his voice tight with urgency. There was no mistaking the fear in his eyes.

Jessie didn't hesitate. She grabbed her jacket and followed Noah and Mia into the hallway, their footsteps echoing on the cold, wooden floor. As they made their way down the corridor, they passed other campers, who were also stirring from their sleep. The hall was filled with wide-eyed whispers of disbelief and confusion, each camper looking to the others for answers that no one had. The scream had come from the far end of the hall, near the oldest part of the camp - where the rumours were thickest, and the air always felt colder.

When they reached the source of the scream,

the sight that greeted them froze them all in place. Sadie, the most popular girl in their class, was lying motionless on the floor. Her face was as pale as marble, her eyes wide open, staring blankly into the ceiling, yet there was no sign of life in them. The eerie silence that followed was suffocating, as though the entire camp had exhaled a breath it had been holding for years. Jessie felt her stomach twist in a way she had never experienced before - this was no accident. Noah knelt beside Sadie, checking for a pulse despite the obvious. "She's gone," he whispered, his voice tight with disbelief.

Mia looked around, her eyes darting nervously. "But - she didn't slip. How could she fall like that? Her limbs - look at how they're twisted."

The campers stood frozen, their faces pale, their voices lost in shock. The scream had not been an accident. Something far darker had just begun. And Jessie knew, with a deep, gnawing certainty, that this was only the beginning.

SEASONS

In winter the summer trees go bare,
Fading away in the frosty air,
This is the time of despair.

Spring flowers bloom in the blazing sun,
Everyone is happy and having fun,
This is a good time for everyone.

Autumn is a time of care,
There is love in the autumn air
This is the time of bare.

Summer is the time we get out the pool,
Making sure we stay cool,
Summer is a time for no school.



WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN CLUBS!



by Bruno Kruszyński

Are you stuck in your break / lunchtime, not knowing what to do? Bored of walking around the premises a hundred times? The solution to these dull, daily doings? Attend a club! There are multiple to choose from (Did you know this article was made in Creative Writing Club in A14?).

Since there are SO MANY clubs, there WILL be a club to your taste! Here are 3 reasons you should apply.

REASON 1: FRIENDSHIPS

When joining a club, you might feel like you're on your own and isolated, but making friends can help with your social skills and with your self-esteem!

REASON 2: MENTAL WELLBEING

If you're that person that is always alone in a dark corner and says: "I'm fine..." but not? That might be a sign that you need to get out there and socialise! You can talk about anything during the club (And at student support, Thursday breaks to Ms Smith in B6, teachers and your friends!) plus it can make you happier :) !

REASON 3: PHYSICAL WELLBEING

If you want to be the 'Active YOU', Active clubs (such as Football or Rugby) are a good choice!

You can run and jump, almost anything! It's like you're becoming a better you in a few easy steps:

1. Apply
2. Get the needed uniform
3. ENJOY!

And those are my three favourite reasons to why you should join a club!



MONTHLY NEWS

MEAL DEALS

Welcome back to our newspaper from Creative writing club!

Today's news in the paper is that they should add **MEAL DEALS** to the school menu!! Let's hear some thoughts from some students!

Student 1 said: "They would boost the school's economy. Maybe they should do it with the pizza and pasta."

Student 2 said: "I have school lunch so it would be very useful. That could be very good for students so they don't have to keep going in the queue."

Student 3 said: "That would be quite good. They can have the choice of a drink, a main meal and a snack/dessert. I don't really eat school meals but sometimes I get a snack."

Student 4 said: "I want meal deals as they are more affordable than regular meals and I also want ham and cheese toasties."

And the final student said: "I think we should have more affordable meals for people with a set amount from schools or families. In addition to that, I would like a larger variety of food."



ICE CREAM

Today we have interviewed a person who bought one of Guiseppe's ice creams. (He bought this ice cream from the ice cream man on 23/04/26).

Now here is the speaker's (Bruno Kruszyński) comment: "I got this ice cream from a friend, it was very delicious but a bit pricey. I remember once on St Patrick's day, my identical twin brother bought £4, I repeat at least £4 worth of icecream for **OTHER PEOPLE**. I can't believe he forgot about me! :("



That's it for this month! See you soon and thank you for reading!!

Written at Creative Writing Club!

STUDY TIPS: HOW TO ACE YOUR EXAMS

Don't know how to revise?

We got you. Here are our study tips to make your life easier:

WHAT ARE THE COMMON MISTAKES?

- **Passive Learning** (e.g. re-reading or highlighting everything) - it gives you a false sense of security, you might think you know it but you don't.
- **Cramming** - Everyone knows it's wrong but we still do it. Trying to learn everything at once causes high stress and fast forgetting. Don't do it!
- **Multitasking** - Studying with distractions (phone, social media, TV) reduces efficiency. You might think you're doing lots but it's just overloading your brain.
- **Consuming too much sugar** - weird? I know, however, high sugar intake can impair memory and slow down brain function.
- **Overwhelming Yourself** - Trying to study for too long without breaks causes burnout, meaning you won't be able to study at all!
- **Writing down every word a teacher says** - just inefficient. You won't really learn anything as you are just copying, it will also make you feel overwhelmed with all the notes.
- **Not Reviewing Past Mistakes** - Ignoring mistakes on practice tests prevents improvement. How can you learn what went wrong if you don't review it? You'll just make the same mistakes again.
- **Neglecting Self-Care** - Skipping meals, not sleeping enough, or not taking breaks reduces cognitive function, making it harder to focus and retain information.

HOW DO YOU CORRECT THEM?

- **Instead of highlighting**, summarize notes in your own words or use active recall—close the textbook and quiz yourself, explain concepts aloud, or use flashcards. Much more effective!
- **Space your study time** and use repetition repetition—studying in shorter, broken-up sessions over time makes it stick in your long term memory.
- **Focus on one topic at a time**, dedicate time and space just for studying- far from any distractions.
- **Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.** Include foods like nuts, dairy or dark chocolate.
- **Avoid burnout.** Trying to study for too long without breaks causes burnout. Use techniques like the Pomodoro technique (25 minutes study, 5-minute break). Or go for a walk, make time for distancing yourself from learning.
- **Focus on understanding** the material and summarizing it in your own words.
- **Analyze why you got an answer wrong** and revisit those topics. Nip it in the bud, don't leave your mistakes for later.
- **Prioritise sleep** - this is crucial for memory consolidation.

ONE MORE TIP:

Focus on understanding, don't just memorise, ensure you understand the "why" behind concepts, especially for subjects requiring application.

DEAR MISS KNOW-IT-ALL



GOT A PROBLEM?

NEED HELP?

LET ME KNOW, I'VE GOT THE ANSWERS.

Dear Miss Know-it-all,

I've got exams coming up and I feel like I'm constantly revising, but it never feels like enough. Everyone else seems so calm and prepared, and it's making me panic more. How do I stop feeling so overwhelmed?

-Stressed

Dear Stressed,

Thank you for writing to me, I'll try to answer your question to the best of my ability. It sounds like you're dealing with a lot of intense pressure and I know that it can feel really lonely, especially when you think everyone else is super organised. However, you're not alone. I'm sure that most people feel the way you do and look at you as prepared.

One thing you might try is going on a short walk when you can't concentrate. It could also help to get a good night's sleep, instead of staying up studying. Remember, you don't have to handle everything at once, it's ok to feel like you are. There are some study tips in the newspaper that might also help.

Bear in mind, you can always feel like you need to do more but the more pressure you put on yourself the less likely you will perform at your full potential.

Good luck with your exams,

Miss Know-it-all

DEAR MISS KNOW-IT-ALL

Hey,

Two of my friends have fallen out and now they both expect me to take their side. I don't want to lose either of them, but it's getting really awkward. What should I do?

-In the middle

Hey In the middle,

Sounds like you're in a bit of an uncomfortable situation, no one likes picking sides between two equally important people in their life.

This is a really hard question to answer as I don't know the situation or your friends. The best advice I could give you is to tell them how you feel with both of them there and ask them to talk it out for you. Remember things will sort themselves out how they're meant to. Remind them that you won't take sides, but that you want this to work out. If you can, consider talking to someone else about it, who knows the situation.

Sometimes just sharing with someone can bring up some great advice you would not have thought of.

I hope that your friendship issues can resolve,

Miss Know-it-all

Miss Know-it-all,

I feel like I'm just kind of there at school. I have people I talk to, but I don't feel like anyone really notices me or cares if I'm around. How do I become more confident and actually feel included?

-Invisible

Invisible,

Thank you for writing to me, it takes courage to share about a problem like this.

It sounds like you're dealing with the classic wallflower problem. That can make you feel really isolated from everyone, especially when you feel like no one really knows or pays attention to you.

One thing I need to tell you is that you are not alone, there are many people who feel the same as you daily. However, it could also help to try and talk more to people, start small and try to build deeper friendships. Remember, you don't have to handle everything at once — small steps can make a big difference.

You won't feel like this forever, even if it feels like a lot right now. Be patient with yourself, and don't expect major changes to happen straight away.

Best of luck,

Miss Know-it-all

POEMS

*The patio is smooth and warm
The tiles bear my weight
A butterfly's wings flutter
Rain goes down the gutter*

*A peaceful day
With the occasional car
Far away from 'home'
But this is where I belong,
At Ammachi's patio
Where I'll be staying for long...*



*A mysterious planet
Mystical and beautiful
It revolves around a star
Burning bright and blue
They live in co-existence
So why, oh why can't we too?*



*The petals fly in the air
They scatter everywhere
In the grass
In the pond
In the garden of which I grew fond
They swish and leap
And dance and twirl
In the garden where everything
unfurls.*



THE ST. BEDES INTERHOUSE SPELLING BEE

by Sienna Presti

The spelling bee was an absolutely incredible experience, one that I will remember for a long time.

From the moment it began, there was a sense of excitement and anticipation in the room. Everyone had worked so hard to prepare, and it showed in the confidence and determination of each participant.

The atmosphere was both competitive and supportive, which made the event even more special.

Each round brought new challenges, with words that tested not only memory but also focus and composure. It was amazing to see how participants handled difficult words with such poise, thinking carefully before spelling each letter. Even when mistakes were made, they were met with encouragement and respect, creating a positive environment for everyone involved.

One of the most impressive aspects of the spelling bee was the level of skill displayed. The contestants demonstrated an incredible range of vocabulary and language, tackling complex and unfamiliar words with bravery. It was inspiring to watch people push themselves and rise to the occasion, showing just how much effort they had put into preparing.

The audience also played an important role in making the event so enjoyable. Their support, applause, and encouragement helped boost the confidence of the participants. It felt like everyone was united in celebrating learning and achievement, rather than just focusing on winning.

Overall, the spelling bee was not just a competition, but a celebration of knowledge, perseverance, and courage. It brought people together, highlighted the importance of language, and showed what can be done.



THE ANDORRA SKIING TRIP

by Bruno Kruszyński

Hello, good morning or afternoon imaginative readers! We are making a review on the year 8 & 9 skiing trip to Andorra! 🏔️

I interviewed year 7s (including myself) before they travelled to the high summits of the Alps.

Here is Carsons's comment: "I'm very excited to go on this trip. I've never been skiing before but I'm practicing on the dry slopes!"

As you can see from the interview, our interviewee was very excited to go on this opportunity. I felt the excitement myself!



SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRINCIPALITY!

- Andorra is a landlocked microstate in the Pyrenees mountains between France and Spain. Renowned for its world-class ski resorts, duty-free shopping, and breathtaking mountain scenery, the country thrives on tourism.
- Capital: Andorra la Vella (the highest capital city in Europe).
- Official Language: Catalan (Spanish, French, and Portuguese are also widely spoken).
- Currency: Euro €.
- Government: Parliamentary democracy governed by two honorary Co-Princes (the President of France and the Bishop of Urgell, Spain).
- Size: 468 square kilometers, one of Europe's smallest states!

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

- Winter Sports: Home to massive ski domains like Grandvalira and Vallnord, which offer hundreds of kilometres of snowy slopes.
 - Duty-Free Shopping: Because it is not an EU member, Andorra is a famous destination for heavily discounted luxury goods, electronics, and alcohol, particularly along the "shopping mile" in the capital.
 - Thermal Spas: Located in Escaldes-Engordany, Caldea is Europe's largest thermal spa complex.
 - Nature & Hiking: Boasts 65 summits over 2,000 metres and beautiful national parks that are popular for hiking in the warmer months.
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BULGARIA

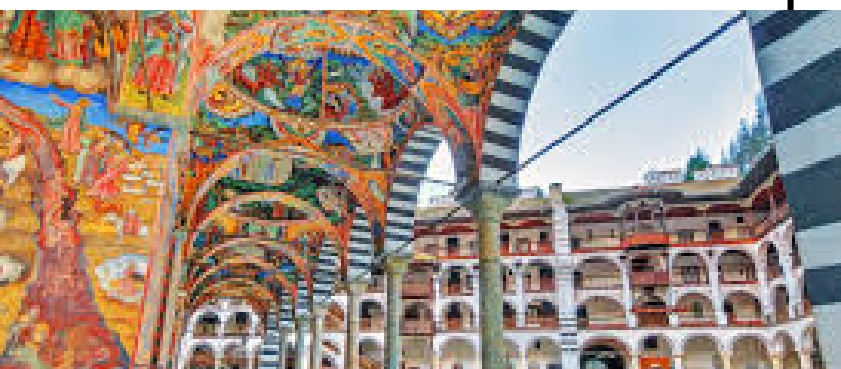
by Mihaela Mihaylova



- Established in 681 AD, it is one of Europe's oldest nations and the only one that has never changed its original name.



- Bulgaria ranks third in Europe for the number of valuable archaeological monuments after Italy and Greece



- Bulgaria is world-renowned for its production of rose oil (supplying the vast majority of the global market), its unique probiotic yogurt, and being the birthplace of the Cyrillic alphabet.



DESIGN

3D PRINTING

Hello, it's my pleasure to see you glancing at this section. For the past visitors, welcome back!

And for the new, welcome to the Design section. Where you will learn many different designing techniques, like architecting, 3d designing, and many more!

If you want to learn anything specific, please contact one of the following teachers, so that they can pass it on to me; Mr Rutherford and/or Mrs Parsons.

Today, I will be covering a bit about 3d printing!

An aspect of design that isn't necessarily easy, but is known as one of the most popular and recognised features of design.

To begin 3d printing, you must need the following:

- A 3d printing machine
- A site or app that is designed for 3d printing

Both of these can be found at our school DT classrooms, which with permission, may be accessible to students during lunch or break.

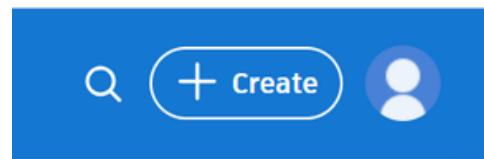
Now, for the fun part.

Sites such as Autodesk Inventor, are quite known already, but personally, I prefer Tinkercad.

It is *a lot* easier to create, especially if you want to make something with chains - that ensures your creation can move in various different ways (I will explain how to make a chain further down). So let's stick to this site for now!

Once logging in, you need to find the “create” button. Which is normally located in the top right side of your screen:

This is what you need to look for:



After finding and clicking it, you will be met with 3 options, 3D design, circuits and codeblocks. You want to click the first one: 3D design.

After the program loads you into your first workplace, you are pretty much done!

All you have left to do at this point is to learn the basics, like, how to get certain shapes into your creation, or how to rename it. It's pretty simple.

But I'll have leave that up to you, simply because there is just too much of it to explain! However, to spare you the time of searching, I will give you a link to a tutorial video.

If you wish to, type the link into a search engine, and it will pop up!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOs6MdjZy_4&t=86s

Now, time for a fun add-on for your creations...

CHAINS

Placing chains amongst your design is a clever way to give your creation a bit of life and movement.

To do this, first, select the shape “Torus” and drag two of them onto your workspace.

Next, set the width of both your shapes to 29.00 - if you wish to, you can leave it just the way it is! It’s just a case of preference.

After that, click on the shapes and take a look at the properties. You want to find the one that says, “Tube” and lower it to 1.5.

This will make sure that when you print your creation out, the chain won’t get stuck, and will be the perfect size.

Now, for the final step, turn one of the shapes onto its side (make sure that the shape does not cross under the grid, the 3D printing machine will not print anything that is below there), before moving the shapes closer together until it forms a single chain (make sure that the shapes do not touch in their final positions, the chain will not move when printed if it does so).

Of course, you can continue chaining it until you come up with an endless, 3D printed chain, however, if you wish to make a 3D printed animal, or a basket hoop, you can link the ends of the chains up with something else. As long as the rest of your creation doesn’t block the chain’s movement, the possibilities are endless!

Thank you so much for reading the design section today. Have a great day, and I hope to see you here again next time!

SUMMER

Go have fun

Play in the sun

Come on

I know you wanna

So don’t be a downer

Please come

Don’t act dumb

We’ll make a bucket list

Maybe we’ll try training away your lisp

So please join me outside

Maybe find a bike to ride

And watch as the sun sets

While we make our summer bets.





THE BLURB

One pinky-promise. Three different schools. A thousand shared lies.

Amelia, Clare, and Samanta vowed to stay lonely together, certain that their circle was enough. But as the iron gates of St. Jude's close behind Amelia, she discovers that a promise to stay lonely is just a prison sentence. From "mechanical bee" emergencies in a high-tech science lab to the secret lure of strawberry gummy bears, Amelia's world is getting bigger—but at what cost? Join Amelia as she learns that real loyalty doesn't mean standing still.

THE CHARACTERS

Amelia (The Reluctant Double Agent):

Known for her oversized St. Jude's blazer and a phone permanently glued to her palm. She guards a vow while secretly admiring her new surroundings.

Secret Talent: Can sit perfectly still for forty minutes in a cloakroom without making a single sound.

Violet (The Gummy Bear Legend):

Identified by her bright yellow lanyard and a notebook filled with neon dragon doodles. She is the mastermind behind the "Inflatable Flamingo" prank.

Secret Talent: "Sleight-of-hand" candy delivery—she can slide a gummy bear across a stone lab bench faster than the human eye can see.

Dr. Aris (The Scientist):

A man who looks carved from a single block of ice. His lab coat is blindingly white, and his spectacles reflect everything—especially rule-breakers.

Secret Talent: Detecting the vibration of a "mechanical bee" (a phone) through three inches of solid oak from across the room.

Clare & Samanta (The Original Trio):

The other two-thirds of the pinky-promise. Clare is surviving West Hill with a netball bib, and Samanta is navigating The Grange in a football kit.

Secret Talent: Mastering the "Triple-Harmony of Fake Misery" over a video call.

Maya (The Voice of Reason): Amelia's older sister, usually found buried under a mountain of college textbooks.

Secret Talent: Giving life-changing advice while simultaneously highlighting the Krebs cycle in three different colours.

THE BREAKING POINT OF THE TRIO

CHAPTER 1: THE LION'S JAW

The iron gates of St. Jude's Secondary School didn't just open; they groaned. It was a heavy, rhythmic metallic sound that set Amelia's teeth on edge, echoing against a morning sky painted in streaks of bruised purple and cold, mocking gold. To Amelia, those black iron bars initially looked like the teeth of a giant, jagged and indifferent, waiting to swallow her whole. But as she stood there, her feet frozen on the pavement, she noticed the school's crest—a magnificent golden lion—shimmering on the gate's centre. Underneath, the motto was etched in stone: *Ad Astra—To the Stars*. To Amelia, standing there in a blazer that felt three sizes too big, it felt more like a warning than an invitation.

For six years, her world had been a small, safe circle. It was a fortress built of shared lunchboxes, whispered secrets in the back of the playground, and the unshakable presence of Clare and Samanta. Now, that circle had been snapped like a dry twig under the weight of three different postcodes. As she stepped onto the gravel, the crunch under her shoes sounded like bone. Her new blazer felt like a suit of cardboard armour—stiff, scratchy against the sensitive skin of her neck, and smelling strongly of chemical dye and factory air.

She looked back at her mum's car, but the grey outback was already being pulled away into the sea of morning traffic, a final link to her old life disappearing behind a wall of white vans and rushing parents. The "Trio Vow" from the night before was ringing in her ears, louder than the school bell: No new best friends. No replacements. We stay lonely together. Amelia clutched her backpack straps

so hard her palms turned a raw, stinging red. She wasn't just a student walking through a gate; she was a soldier guarding a sacred, lonely secret.

CHAPTER 2: THE RIVER OF STRANGERS

The transition from the quiet gravel of the driveway to the interior of St. Jude's was like stepping from a calm pond into a Category 5 hurricane. As soon as Amelia pushed through the heavy oak double doors, a wall of sound hit her—a chaotic, rushing river of limbs, slamming lockers, and a thousand overlapping conversations that sounded like rumbling thunder. The hallways were narrow and seemed to stretch on forever, lined with beige doors that looked like they led to nowhere. Amelia felt herself shrinking. Older students, who looked less like teenagers and more like fully grown adults with deep, vibrating voices, shoved past her without a glance. Their shoulders were blocks of stone, their backpacks like giant shells. The air inside was thick and suffocating. It carried the stinging, chemical scent of fresh industrial floor wax—a smell that made her nose itch and her throat feel tight. Under the harsh glare of the fluorescent lights, the tiled floors acted like mirrors, reflecting the blurred movements of a thousand strangers. Every time a locker slammed, the sound echoed off the high ceilings, vibrating in Amelia's chest like a heartbeat that wasn't her own. She found a small, cramped alcove between a trophy cabinet—filled with silver cups that seemed to mock her—and a dusty radiator. It was the only place she could breathe without being stepped on.

Her hands were shaking as she pulled her phone from her blazer pocket, keeping it hidden in the gap between her bag and her chest.

Clare: I'm at the West Hill gates. I'm literally staring at the floor because if I look up, I think I'm going to throw up on my new shoes. Why is everything so grey here?

Samanta: The Grange is a fortress. I'm currently hiding in a toilet stall just to hear myself breathe. I've been here for ten minutes. I hate this.

Amelia's thumbs hovered over the glass, the ghost of their pinky-promise feeling like a cold weight around her finger. She looked out from her alcove at a group of girls standing near the lockers just a few feet away. They were leaning against the metal doors, their laughter sharp, easy, and practiced. They looked like they belonged. They looked like they had never known what it felt like to be a "social ghost." A pang of isolation, sharp and heavy as a lead weight, settled in her chest.

Amelia: I'm okay. I'm actually fine. The building is kind of cool and I found my way to my locker already. Don't worry about me.

She hit send, and as the "delivered" icon appeared, she felt the weight of her first lie settle into her bones.

CHAPTER 3: THE GUMMY BEAR TRAITOR

Before English class, Amelia found herself wandering. She had followed a sign for the library, hoping for a sanctuary, but what she found was a cathedral of silence. The St. Jude's library was three storeys of mahogany shelves and rolling ladders that looked like something out of a movie. Students sat in deep leather armchairs, their faces buried in glowing tablets or thick novels. Amelia felt like a trespasser. She walked past the "New Arrivals" section, her shoes squeaking on the polished wood, feeling the eyes of a hundred scholars on her back. She didn't

belong in this world of quiet intelligence; she belonged in a messy garden with her two best friends.

She scrambled to English just as the bell rang, a sharp, electric shriek. Room 102 was filled with the smell of old paper and the golden light of a late September sun. Amelia slumped into a seat in the third row, her shoulders hunched. Then, the stool next to her scraped back with a jarring screech. A girl with a bright yellow lanyard and a messy ponytail sat down, her notebook already exploding with intricate, neon-coloured doodles of dragons.

"I like your notebook," the girl whispered, her voice bubbling with a friendliness that Amelia wasn't prepared for. "It's very... aesthetic. I'm Violet."

Amelia opened her mouth to offer a cold, distant reply, but Violet was faster. With the speed of a magician, she slid a giant, strawberry-flavoured gummy bear onto Amelia's desk. It was glistening, red, and smelled like artificial summer. Amelia stared at it. Taking the candy felt like signing a peace treaty with the enemy. But the morning had been so long, and her stomach was a hollow cavern of nerves. She looked at Violet's kind, expectant eyes, and then at the bear. She popped it into her mouth. The burst of sugar was overwhelming. She felt like a total traitor with every chewy, delicious second.

CHAPTER 4: THE COMPETITION OF MISERY

Lunchtime arrived not as a relief, but as a heavy, looming cloud. While the rest of St. Jude's exploded into activity—the "Lion's Den" canteen filling with the smell of toasted paninis and the shouts of students heading to the pitches—Amelia felt like she was navigating a minefield. To join a table would be a betrayal. To laugh at a joke would be a crime.

She scouted the perimeter of the massive green field, her shoes soaking up the dew from the grass, until she found “The Spot.” It was a gnarled, ancient oak tree near the back fence, its roots twisting out of the damp earth like the gnarled fingers of a sleeping giant. She slumped against the rough bark, the cold dampness seeping through her blazer, and pulled out her phone.

The screen flickered to life, showing Clare and Samanta’s faces in a shaky, pixelated video call. “I spent my entire break in the library staring at a book about Types of Moss,” Clare began, her voice cracking. Her eyes were red-rimmed, and she looked small against the backdrop of her new, grey school. “The librarian looked at me like I was a ghost. I’ve never felt so invisible, Amelia. It’s like I don’t even exist here.”

“I walked the entire football pitch four times,” Samanta added, her camera shaking as she trudged along a chain-link fence. “I pretended I was looking for a lost earring just to avoid having to talk to anyone. I’m basically a social ghost.”

Amelia felt the strawberry gummy bear sitting heavy in her stomach—a sweet, sugary secret. She couldn’t tell them about the dragon-doodler. She couldn’t tell them that a girl had actually been kind to her.

“I just sat in the cloakrooms,” Amelia lied, her voice dropping to a hollow whisper. “It smelled like wet wool and disappointment. I just waited for this call.” They all sighed—a triple-harmony of fake misery. On the screen, they looked like three survivors holding onto a fraying rope.

CHAPTER 5: THE SCIENCE OF SECRECY

Science was held in S-14, a room that felt less like a classroom and more like a high-tech laboratory. The air was chilled, circulating with a faint metallic tang, and the benches were slabs of sleek, black stone that stayed cold even when you rested your arms on them.

Along the walls, glass cabinets held mysterious bubbling beakers and a full-sized skeleton that seemed to watch the students with hollow, curious eyes.

At the front of the room stood a man who looked like he had been carved out of a single block of granite. His lab coat was so white it practically glowed, and it crinkled with a sharp, authoritative snap every time he moved.

“I am Dr. Aris,” he announced, his voice a steady, low rumble. “In this lab, we respect three things: the equipment, the instructions, and each other. Science is not about guessing; it is about being precise. It is about seeing the world exactly as it is, not how you wish it to be.”

Amelia scrambled to a stool at the back, her heart thumping. To her growing guilt, she ended up right next to the yellow lanyard again.

“Hey,” Violet whispered, leaning in so close that Amelia caught the sugary scent of candy again. “I’ve got a backup stash of gummy bears in my bag... I think Aris is actually a robot, don’t you?” Amelia bit her lip, forcing herself to stare at the black stone bench. Every “good” thing about St. Jude’s—the cool lab, the interesting teacher, the girl who wouldn’t stop being nice—felt like a brick being removed from the fortress she had built with her friends.

CHAPTER 6: THE MECHANICAL BEE

The lecture was twenty minutes in when the disaster started. **Buzz. Buzz-buzz.**

Amelia’s blazer pocket began to dance. Under the table, her phone screen was exploding. It was the Trio group chat. Clare was having a “Level 4 Loneliness Emergency” because someone had sat in “her” spot. Then, the rhythm changed. It wasn’t a text; it was a full-blown video call.

The vibration against the heavy wooden stool

sounded like a drum kit in the silent room. Brrr-up. Brrr-up. Dr. Aris stopped mid-sentence. He set his pen down with a slow, terrifying click. He didn't yell. He simply began a slow, predatory walk toward the back of the room, his polished shoes clicking on the tiles like a countdown. "The laws of physics dictate that sound travels quite efficiently through solid wood, Miss Amelia," he said, his shadow stretching across her desk. "Is there a restless, mechanical bee trapped in your pocket? Or is the universe trying to tell you something more important than the molecular structure of water?"

Amelia's blood turned to ice. She could feel the eyes of the entire class boring into her. She thought the Trio Vow was about to get her expelled on day one.

CHAPTER 7: THE SHIELD OF MERCY

Amelia's blood turned to ice. She could feel the phone thrumming against her leg like a trapped bird, and in the clinical silence of the lab, it felt like the entire world could hear Clare's voice vibrating through the floorboards. Dr. Aris leaned over her, his shadow a dark, heavy weight across her desk. He didn't move; he just waited for her to crumble.

But Violet didn't hesitate. With a sudden, fluid movement that looked entirely accidental, she swept her oversized, crumpled map of the school directly over Amelia's lap. The thick, laminated paper hit the desk with a heavy thud, instantly muffling the "mechanical bee."

"I am so sorry, Dr. Aris!" Violet chirped, her voice perfectly pitched between innocent and embarrassed. "I was just trying to find where the Art block was. This map is like a giant, confusing puzzle, and I'm clearly failing the first level."

Dr. Aris shifted his gaze from Amelia to Violet. The silence stretched for an agonising five seconds. He knew—Amelia was sure of it. He saw

the way Amelia's hands were shaking under the table. A small, almost imperceptible glint flashed behind his spectacles, a flicker of something that might have been respect for the quick thinking.

"If that 'emergency' happens to vibrate again," he whispered, leaning in so close that Amelia could see the individual white threads of his lab coat, "it will spend the night in my desk drawer. It can bond with the staplers while you spend your evening in detention. Am I clear, Miss Amelia?"

"Yes, sir," Amelia breathed, her voice barely a thread.

"Splendid," he snapped, straightening up and turning back toward the front of the class. "Now, let's see if we can light a Bunsen burner without calling the fire brigade."

As he walked away, Violet shot Amelia a quick, conspiratorial wink. For the first time, Amelia didn't feel like a "social ghost." She felt like she had a partner in crime.

CHAPTER 8: MAYA'S TEACHINGS

That evening, the air in the kitchen was thick with the smell of roasting garlic and the low hum of the refrigerator. Amelia sat at the wooden breakfast bar, her chin resting on her palm, staring at her phone like it was a ticking bomb. Every time it lit up with a message from the Trio, she felt a physical jolt of anxiety.

Her older sister, Maya, was sprawled on the opposite side of the table, surrounded by thick college textbooks and highlighter pens. She hadn't said a word for twenty minutes, but she had been watching.

"You look like you're waiting for a death sentence, Ams," Maya said, not looking up from her biology notes.

Amelia finally let it out. She told Maya about the pinky-promise in the dark garden, the “wet wool” lies about the cloakroom, the giant strawberry gummy bear, and the terrifying Dr. Aris. “I’m a traitor, Maya,” Amelia whispered, her eyes filling with hot, frustrated tears. “I’m supposed to be lonely. We promised. But I actually like her. I like Violet.”

Maya leaned back, her chair creaking. She looked at Amelia with an expression that was unusually serious. “Ams, listen to me. A promise to stay friends is a beautiful thing. It’s what makes you you. But a promise to stay lonely? That’s just a prison sentence you’ve given yourself. Real friends want you to be happy, even if they aren’t the ones making you laugh that day. You aren’t replacing Clare and Samanta; you’re just making the map bigger. If they really love you, they won’t want you sitting under a tree in the rain just to prove a point.”

CHAPTER 9: THE DOUBLE AGENT

For the next two weeks, Amelia lived a double life that was as exhausting as it was exhilarating.

In the mornings and during the five-minute dashes between classes, she was Violet’s partner. They became a legendary team in S-14, managing to measure chemical reactions with a precision that even Dr. Aris begrudgingly admired. They shared bags of fizzy laces behind the library stacks and whispered about the “Flamingo Prank”—Violet’s latest masterpiece involving an inflatable bird in the foyer—until their sides ached from suppressed laughter.

But as soon as the lunch bell rang, the mask went back on.

Amelia would retreat to the gnarled oak tree at the back of the field, ruffling her hair to make it look messy and damp, pulling her sleeves over her hands to look small and vulnerable. She would sit in the cold, her back against the rough bark, and tell Clare and Samanta that she was “living like a

ghost,” that the school was a “grey prison,” and that she hadn’t spoken to a soul.

The lies were starting to feel like a heavy coat she couldn’t take off. Every time she laughed with Violet, she felt the “Iron Chain” of the promise tighten around her throat. She was failing her old friends by having a life, and she was failing her new friend by keeping her a secret.

CHAPTER 10: THE TRUTH EXPLOSION

Thursday arrived with a sky the colour of wet slate and a tension that had been building in Amelia’s chest for weeks. By the time the lunch bell rang, she felt like a coiled spring. She went through the usual routine: dodging Violet, ruffling her hair until it looked suitably chaotic, and trudging toward the gnarled oak tree. She sat on the damp grass and hit the call button. The faces of Clare and Samanta flickered onto the screen.

“I can’t take it anymore,” Samanta began, but her voice sounded different today. Higher. Breathless. “I spent my break... uh... staring at the goalposts. Alone. I’m basically a shadow.”

Amelia leaned in, her eyes narrowing. Something was off. The background behind Samanta was a blur of bright blue, and there was a muffled thumping sound. Suddenly, Samanta’s hand slipped. The phone tilted, and for one sharp, crystal-clear second, the camera captured a girl in a bright blue football kit. The girl was doubled over, laughing, and she was pointing directly at Samanta.

“Who was that?” Amelia asked, her voice cracking like a whip.

“Nobody!” Samanta squeaked, her face turning a shade of red that rivalled a fire engine.

“I can’t do it!” Amelia suddenly shouted, the words erupting from her like water from a

broken dam. She stood up, her phone shaking in her hand. “I’m a liar! I’m a total, strawberry-scented traitor! I met a girl named Violet! She’s amazing and she saved me from a Saturday detention! St. Jude’s isn’t a prison—it’s actually incredible, and I’ve been sitting under this stupid tree lying to you because I was scared of breaking a promise that was making us all miserable!”

She stopped, gasping for air, waiting for the anger. But Clare didn’t hang up. Instead, a sob broke through the speaker—followed immediately by a snort of laughter.

“Oh, thank god!” Clare wailed, half-crying, half-giggling. “Me too! Her name is Sophie. She’s the only reason I haven’t quit West Hill! I’ve been pretending I was reading about moss just so you wouldn’t feel abandoned!”

“Me three!” Samanta yelled, finally letting the girl in the blue kit into the frame. “This is Chloe! I’ve been hiding in a PE shed for a week because I thought if I told you I was having fun, the Trio would be over!”

CHAPTER 11: THE HEXAGON

Two weeks later, the 35-minute gap between their schools was officially bridged. They didn’t meet at a school gate or a lonely tree. They met in the city centre, at a café that smelled of roasted cocoa and cinnamon, where the windows were steamed up against the autumn chill.

Amelia sat at a circular table that was far too small for the crowd they had brought. To her left sat Violet, who was currently trying to explain the “Flamingo Incident” to Chloe and Samanta. To her right was Clare, who was comparing netball notes with Sophie.

There were three different blazers draped over the backs of the chairs: the deep navy of St. Jude’s, the slate grey of West Hill, and the maroon of The

Grange. To anyone else, it was just a mess of polyester. To Amelia, it was a beautiful, chaotic map of a world that had grown twice as large in the space of a month.

The “Trio” hadn’t died. It had simply evolved. It was a hexagon now—six points of contact, six voices joined in a roar of laughter. Amelia realised that Maya had been right. You don’t lose your past by embracing your future; you just give it more room to breathe.

CHAPTER 12: THE PIER OF PROMISES

The first official outing of the “Hexagon” happened at the Old Pier—a weathered, salt-crusted stretch of wood and iron reaching into the grey Atlantic. The air was sharp with the scent of brine and vinegar from the nearby chip shops. Amelia stood at the railings, watching the white foam of the waves. Violet reached into her backpack and pulled out a small metal tin. “Amelia, you have the scrolls?”

Amelia pulled out three crumpled slips of paper—the original “Trio Vow” notes. No new friends. No replacements. Seeing the words now, they looked small and frightened.

“We aren’t burning these because we don’t love each other,” Amelia said, her voice steady.

“We’re burning them because we were wrong. You protect a friendship by making sure there are enough doors for everyone else to get in.”

One by one, they struck matches. Amelia watched as the word Lonely turned to black ash and was swept away by the wind. They spent the rest of the day squeezing into photo booths and sharing massive portions of chips. Her phone buzzed. It was a message from the school portal.

Dr. Aris: Miss Amelia, I noticed your Science project was submitted early. Precise work.

**P.S. The mechanical bee has been quiet lately.
Splendid.**

**Amelia smiled, tucked her phone away, and walked
into the crisp evening air, surrounded by the
wonderful noise of five best friends.**

THE END

