



'Peacock Feather studies'.
Left: Laura Thompson, Year 8
Right: Larissa Huber, Year 8



Anna Mojab, Year 13

Energised Words



Hannah Belameh, Year 7



Josie Westgate, Year 7



Sabine van der Sande, Year 7



Sophia Duplain, Year 7

The Trials of a Group Leader

Year 11 Trip to Parliament and the London Dungeon

5th September 2003

The trip organised with such enthusiasm at the end of the Summer Term is on us already. Such excursions are marvellous in contemplation but as the time for their implementation draws near the reality of the practicalities kick in.

Have I got all the consent forms, will the coach turn up on time, will all the girls, did Mr Wells tell Mrs Harris that we are making an early start because I forgot to, have I filled out a Risk Assessment form and had it been cleared by Health and Safety, have I ordered the first aid kit, is the kitchen aware we need the packed lunches by 8am, have all the relevant personnel been informed of destination, numbers and names of participants and time of departure and return, have we got a mobile phone? – and so it goes on!

Worrying about such practicalities tends to drive the educational reason for the whole business to the back of the mind – legal proceedings for a breach of the duty of care dominate. Nevertheless as the imagined worst case scenarios disappear with the safe progress of the day, why we staff are subjecting ourselves to such stress begins to reappear. Some old philosopher (probably Confucius – he can be blamed for most such aphorisms!) said "I do and I understand" – and he was right: A day's "hands-on" experience is worth hours of theory in the classroom. Taking Year 11 to see the Palace of Westminster in operation (well nearly – one can only go around when the Houses are in recess) will bring home to some (not all) the importance of the legislative process to the functioning of a healthy democracy, while (as this can be rather heavy on the brain) the experience of the London Dungeon provides 'light relief' as well as exposure to some of the less salubrious aspects of the glorious pageant of British history.

I arrived early at school – too early – and wandered around checking things I had already checked half a dozen times – work set to cover classes missed, the consent forms again, contact numbers in case of emergency. Mrs Rees – like me an old hand at this business – turned up soon afterwards and we went through the possible pitfalls again. Coffee helped, by which time excited murmurings started to emanate from the Dining Room indicating some girls had made it in and were socializing noisily. We both set off purposefully with check lists in hand to start ticking off arrivals and were met on the way by Mr Wells who informed us that the coach was in the road – well two successes so far. A quick check indicated that we had all of the girls (a miracle given the 7.45 start) and that no-one had rung in to report illness or mechanical failure. Sandwiches and the first aid kit collected and Reception informed of "all present", Mrs Harris arrived (Mr Wells had told her) – well, things were looking up.

The coach driver, dapper and mustachioed, a slimmed down version of Hercule Poirot – although past his sell-by date as far as the girls were concerned – turned out to be amiable and co-operative. For those who have never had to organise such trips, the character and disposition of the man in charge of the horse is critical – a surly, "it's not my job mate" individual can make the day very difficult. Ours proved to be amenable to varying the

schedule if necessary and was a mine of information on times between our venues and places to eat lunch.

The journey to the Metropolis proved uneventful. The girls listened to music or gossiped inconsequentially, while the staff discussed matters of great import regarding educational policy and what they had done in the summer holidays. On approaching the outskirts of the capital I was interested to see the congestion charge in operation and the driver cheerfully pointed out its boundary and indicated that its introduction had relieved traffic pressure. Had it just. We sailed through Central London and I made a mental note to write to the Honours Committee to recommend that "Red Ken" be given a knighthood – it is still a mental note however as it might not be seen proper that an employee of capitalist education be endorsing the brainwave of a neo-Marxist!

The driver dropped us outside Portcullis House – the chrome and steel edifice with what looks like a ship's funnels on its roof which is now the flash home of our democratically elected representatives and which has cost us poor taxpayers a fortune. And lo – we were early (three cheers for Poirot's look-alike) and had to hang around outside for five minutes while the Education Department got its act together. Entry involved a security check but one not as draconian as that of last year when (because of 9/11) all the girls were frisked. Thereafter we made our way to the Boothroyd Room passing, on the way, the very expensive avenue of trees on the ground floor which provide a rural fantasy to lighten the spirits of harrassed MPs.

The Boothroyd Suite – named after that ex-Tiller girl, the last speaker of the House, the formidable Betty – serves both as a select committee room and the place to which the nation's children are inducted into the mysteries of the workings of the Palace. Being first, our girls were seated in the semicircle of the select committee seats and – having a folie de grandeur – I took it upon myself to pontificate to the girls from the chairman's rostrum. This rush of blood came to an end with the return of the steel framed spectacle harridan from the Education Department and a group of pubescent boys – all eager and scrubbed – from an east London school. The Suite now full, the battleaxe usurped me from the Chairman's seat and instructed her charges into the order of that battle – the video, followed by a talk from an MP and then the tour of the Palace.

The explanatory video – which Messrs Rees, Wells and myself had endured before – is a little soporific but was less so this time as the girls (and staff) were relatively fresh and most managed to pretend to be awake for its twenty minutes. Thereafter she from Education had to play for time for a little as the MP was late but when he arrived things livened up considerably. Although an "unknown" Conservative (he was the MP for Billericay) Mr Baron proved both intelligent, personable and surprisingly liberal. It emerged he was the Conservative Front bench spokesman for Health and had previously resigned from that bench over his party's endorsement of the Iraqi war but had been forgiven and reinstated back since (Mr Wells noting en passant how desperate the Tories must be!). After his "what I do" address most of the questions concerned his position regarding the aforesaid war including two from Emily Ward who showed that she was neither asleep nor switched off. Mr Wells got in his Tony Benn – Today programme question as he had last year.

Baron having a train to catch (or so he said), her of the steel spectacles returned and dragooned us into groups of fifteen and placed us into the safe hands of one of her minions. Our lackey

went by the name of George – a personable, good-looking young man with a toothy smile and a keen desire to please. We trooped out in this George's wake waving goodbye to Betty's bust and descended the steps which took us under Bridge Street and into the labyrinth of Pugin's Neo-Gothic masterpiece.

The architecture and its internal furnishings speak for themselves and don't really need someone prattling on to impress the visitor, but George had a job to do and started his spiel as soon as we hit the Members' Lobby. Thereafter followed the Queen's Robing Room, the various corridors and their Victorian embellishments, the compulsory historical paintings of Waterloo and Trafalgar, which upset Charles de Gaulle, and the Lords and Commons Chambers. The girls were very good and never once sat on chairs they were warned not to and occasionally asked George a semi-literate question if only to shut him up for a bit. Several did rub Churchill's foot as do MPs on entry to the Commons Chamber in the hope that oratory is contagious and several more that of Lloyd George when I informed them of the "Welsh wizard's" disreputable extra-curricular activities.

While very impressive, if for no other reason than the weight of history pressing down on one, the tour of the Palace is hard work and we were all glad to escape into the autumn sunshine and re-join the coach. Girls wished to be re-united with their lunch as most were ravenous but this had to be taken en route to the London Dungeon as Ashdown had cut the time rather fine for it now being 1.15pm and he had booked us in for 1.30pm. However Poirots doppelganger was up to a challenge and navigated through to Tooley Street with unhurried calm where Messrs Rees, Wells and Harris supervised safe disembarkation while Ashdown negotiated for the tickets. Over the phone he had been promised a school's price of £3.50 per head but he had a little difficulty in getting the lady in the booth to honour this promise but after a phone call to someone in the bowels of the Dungeon she agreed and we entered with trepidation.

Mrs Rees particularly so, as she had originally agreed to come only if she could contract out of going around the Dungeon as she – like me – had done this before and it is not a place for the squeamish. She had good grounds for her apprehension and, indeed, it had crossed my mind that some of the girls might have experienced similar qualms. However I had chosen the Dungeon in place of the other traditional venue – the Tate Modern – because while the Modern is impressive (and free) it is hard on both the feet and the spirit unless one is besotted with modern art – and few adolescents are. Now as Parliament had not charged us this year (because we took an unpopular morning slot at short notice) I thought the money saved could be spent on something more adolescent-friendly than the Modern.

It turned out to be a good move. Mrs Rees recanted at the last moment and the exhibits, while ghoulish and grisly, allowed the girls to let off steam by squealing with excited horror as we passed from one barbarity to another and were squirted with water and had skeletons jump out at us. After three group photographs in which girls and staff posed in stocks in a gruesome tableaux we began the tour which had been refined since my last trip some years back. There were now a series of set pieces – everything from the torture chamber at Newgate Gaol to dreadful Plague scenes and reconstructions of the nocturnal activities of Jack the Ripper. The highlight however was the boat trip through the backstreets of the East End in the eighteenth century by which the filth, degradation and inhumanity of that time is forcibly brought home. Moreover the rancid, stagnant, foetid atmosphere was given unusual force by

the hot and humid atmosphere of the Dungeon which is not deliberate and one prayed that they soon invest in some air conditioning.

It was a blessed relief when the tour ended in the ubiquitous gift shop and we could breathe fresh air again. A few girls bought momentos but most were keen to re-gain the coach and reunion with their loved ones in Brighton as soon as possible. The trip back lacked the buzz of that in the morning – they always do – the girls were physically and mentally exhausted (as were the staff) and sleep or contemplation were the order of the day. The coach driver returned us as efficiently as he had brought us and apart from dropping off a few girls en route (which involved the compulsory hugging and kissing of friends they would not see again until Monday) in Brighton (parental permission having been obtained) we duly hit Eastern Road at 5.30pm.

The girls then disappeared as if magicked away while the long suffering staff checked the coach for litter and lost property. There was none of the latter and little of the former and, in truth, the girls had behaved impeccably given that, for all its educational worth, it is still a long and tiring day for them. Prior to returning to the bosoms of their own families the staff honoured their duty of care and returned unwanted food to the kitchens, the first aid kit to Reception and informed the latter and the Headmistress that all had gone swimmingly.

So all those pre-trip worries had been unnecessary. No-one had let us down, no-one had disappeared or run off, no-one had sat on forbidden seats, no-one had been sick on the coach, no-one had lost a Cartier watch or the dreaded mobile phone. But then there is always next year!

P. Ashdown

Feetures

COMPLETE FOOTCARE LTD

Contemporary chiropody and
waxing – established 1985

Plus

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aqua Detox • Cryo Therapy • Bio Mechanics • Reflexology 	<p>the revolutionary way to detoxify and re-balance the body</p> <p>fast and effective treatment for removing verrucae</p> <p>ease tired and aching feet with Bespoke Insoles</p> <p>for general well-being</p>
--	---

make an appointment:
01273 726575

58A New Church Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 4FL

STORIES

The Outcast

The quiet girl stood by the great sea stretching as far as the eye can see. The sea crashed violently against the rocks. The girl's flowing skirt blew in the wind. Her name was Amanda. The young woman was an immigrant from war-torn Bosnia. Amanda's parents had been killed by Serb forces and Amanda was left alone orphaned, unloved and all her hopes and dreams had been destroyed. Amanda had come to England to get away from the country that was no longer safe for her. With the help of a British soldier named Alex Stuart, Amanda had applied for asylum and Alex helped her to find a flat to rent and a well-paid job. Amanda's job was to be a sales clerk in a clothes shop. The wages were seventy pounds per week. Every evening, after Amanda went home and the sun had set, two candles were lit to shine through the dark night. Amanda was only sixteen and she knew that she had to behave like a mother. She could no longer play outside in the bright sunshine with her friends. Also, at aged fifteen Amanda's parents were murdered for helping Bosnian Muslims to hide and escape. The two candles were Amanda's guide through the darkness of evil. They gave her comfort and hope through the lonely evenings. The days went by and Amanda had still not said much. The neighbours thought the quiet girl strange and she was left out of social meetings. Amanda went to church every evening and Sunday mornings. She supported the Red Cross and Amnesty International. The people at Amanda's church all felt she was an outcast and simply ignored her. She suffered silently, but in her eyes were the silent words which she could not express. Day by day, Amanda became thinner and paler.

There was no-one alive from her family. Amanda's co-workers noticed the change in her but they dared not speak to her, unless it was absolutely necessary. At home, Amanda hung pictures of her departed parents on the wall above her bed. Next to the candles stood a picture of her parents on their wedding day. One night, Amanda had a strange vision. Her cousins were in a concentration camp. A little blonde haired girl spoke to her: "Amanda, please get us out of this terrible place. You are our only hope. Our parents have died and we are alone." This child was her cousin Anna. Then her parents spoke to her: "Amanda, we have seen deeply into your heart. We have seen the pain our death has caused you and we are sorry. Your mother and I will never leave you. You are in our hearts!" her father said. Then her mother spoke: "You should have had more time to enjoy yourself as a child. You are sixteen and yet you must do the work of a mother. This war has made you older, but remember this: children as young as four are forced to do hard adult labour. You must never complain." The visions disappeared. Amanda decided to trace her cousins, to bring them home and to care for them. The next few days were busy. Amanda asked for four weeks' leave, paid all her bills for the electricity and water and packed a small suitcase for the journey. Then she went to see Alex Stuart who was so kind to her. Alex was delighted to see her. Amanda quietly explained that she would try to trace her cousins and become a guardian to them. Alex supported Amanda's idea and admired her love and unselfishness for others. The next day Amanda left. The journey was not too long.

As soon as Amanda arrived in Bosnia, she returned to the scene where her parents were last seen. The next day Amanda searched tirelessly every prison camp hoping beyond hope to find her cousins, Anna and Ellena. They were her hope, her only friends and family. Anna and Ellena were blonde haired and Amanda had black hair inherited from her mother Vera. Amanda's hopes were beginning to fade. She spoke to people from her parents' village. No-one saw the two girls. One day Amanda was near a mass grave when she spotted two bodies. They were Anna and Ellena. Amanda's shock turned to guilt and pain.

The two girls had been knifed and bludgeoned. Although Anna and Ellena's features were distorted, they looked like they were sleeping. Amanda stood looking at her cousins. Two eight-year old girls, victims of prejudice, injustice and violence. Now the two girls were sleeping in peace. No-one could do them any more harm.

Sadly, Amanda's final hope was taken from her. She left Bosnia two days later. Distraught, Amanda returned home. After a quick shower she went to see Alex. He was deeply moved by her bad fortune. After returning home, Amanda became more withdrawn and pale. Amanda's co-workers became concerned for her. She was so pale and thin. The head of the department, Mrs Sheldon, was friendly and pleasant. Amanda explained that she was alone in the world and that she was suffering from depression and trauma, from the war and witnessing her parents' murder and the shock of her cousins' murder. Now, Mrs Sheldon understood the girl. Amanda was upset because there was no hope in life. In her job, Amanda worked hard, and was too shy and quiet. Eventually, unable to cope any longer with depression and trauma she sought help from a professional counsellor. The days went by and there appeared to be no change in Amanda's demeanour. Every night, the two candles were lit. The months went by and Christmas was approaching. Everywhere Amanda went there was Christmas music and decorations. She remembered the beautiful tree, all her family members, the love of her neighbours, and the presents and Christmas meals. All that was in the past now. There was no-one to celebrate Christmas with Amanda, this year. Amanda had no thought for anything special. The days grew shorter and darker. Christmas had arrived. This was a sad time, spending it alone in one flat with only two candles, no trees or presents. As the end of the afternoon came, Amanda received a pack of Christmas cards with messages of condolence and wishes of good luck.

Three months passed, and Spring had arrived. One day Amanda had the television on and heard that Slobodan Milosevic had lost the elections in October and was transferred to the Hague in April. Alex Stuart had come to ask Amanda to testify in the Hague. Amanda agreed to do this. Testifying in the Hague against Slobodan Milosevic would bring her some closure. Amanda felt that this was her parents' will and that this would be the last and final favour she could ever do for them. Alex had been a great friend to her. He supported, guided and advised Amanda whenever possible. Amanda's colleagues were warm and friendly to her. The people in Amanda's Church learnt of her fate and were no longer hostile to her. Amanda had been in England for a

year now. As the time for her to go to the Hague approached, Amanda's days became busier. Amanda left for the Hague in the bright sunshine of June. She travelled by plane.

The next day, she appeared at the International War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague. Amanda was dressed in a black skirt, white blouse and black blazer. Her dark lustrous hair was held back in a neat bun and her face had an expression of severity and purpose. Under that cold, stiff demeanour no-one knew that the girl's heart was broken with grief and pain. When Amanda was called to the stand her posture became even more stiff. She gave her name and age.

"Do you recognise this man?" the Judge asked.

"Yes, I do recognise him," Amanda replied.

"Where from?" the Judge asked.

"From television," Amanda replied.

"Did he have your family killed?" the Judge questioned.

"Yes, he did," Amanda answered.

"Why?" was the Judge's question.

"Because we helped Bosnian Muslims to hide," Amanda responded.

The trial was three hours long, and after that the Judge adjourned it until the next day. As Amanda sat down, memories from the war came back to her. The shock and guilt that she did not risk her life to save her family will always stay with her.

As Amanda descended the steps from the Hague in the sunset, a new emotion rose in her. It was a sense of peace, acceptance and hope. The healing process had begun. Somewhere in the sunset there was a better life for Amanda in the future. It will not be in days or perhaps months, but someday Amanda's heart would find hope and tranquillity, and healing.

The years went on, and at twenty-one Amanda obtained British citizenship. Amanda still went to counselling, and the healing process of the mind, body and spirit progressed slowly and steadily. Amanda had become friends with people from her parish and workplace and they no longer resented her. After years of struggle, sadness and pain, Amanda found peace, hope and joy at long, long last.

Michelle Mezny, Year 10

There was a garden

The holidays were nearly over, and we would soon go back to school for our 4th grade exams. Emily and I were practising our spells every afternoon during the last three weeks to get ready. The exam was going to be hard, we just knew it, but if we didn't pass it in our first go, we wouldn't be able to take another one until next year.

On the day of our exams, I woke up early and got ready to be called to go to the exam hall. As my name was called, Emily had already gone in. I took a deep breath and opened the door in front of me. There was a garden. I held on tight to my wand and walked in.

I passed flowers and fields of grass, but still nothing happened. Then I came to a gate with two doors on it, I wondered if Emily came to the same place as me when I just chose a door at random.

It had patterns of numbers and pictures of clocks on it, so I expected that I would be going back through time. But when I opened the door, I saw the ancient Globe Theatre where Shakespeare's plays used to be performed.

They were performing the play *Macbeth* and it was the part where Lady Macbeth is telling Macbeth about the plans of killing King Duncan. I was quite surprised when no-one in the theatre could actually see me. I walked around the theatre and came to another door.

Carol Pau, Year 9

A Door

I arrived home on the last day of school. I couldn't believe how fast the term had gone. At first everything was normal. I got up late and went to bed late and didn't do much in between except walk my dog in the morning. One day I was home alone because my mum and dad had gone out shopping and I stayed at home. Every time mum and dad go out my mum always tells me to not open the door or go out. But when this person approached my house I didn't know what to do. I sat there and then the door bell went and I found myself being dragged to the door. I opened the door and he was holding a package for my dad. I signed for it and shut the door.

It was about 10am two weeks later and my parents went to my grandparents' house. I didn't go because I was doing revision. And once again this person was at the door and rang the bell. First time I didn't answer, I waited for him to go. He left the package on the ground and drove off. I went outside and brought the package inside the house. I opened it even though it wasn't for me. I found the box empty. When my dad came home I had to ask him why he was having boxes delivered to his house and my dad said he hadn't been ordering anything.

Around 11am two weeks later, I went out with my parents because I didn't want to see the man approach the house. It was 4pm when we came home and found the house had been cleared out, there was nothing left. When the police arrived they asked the neighbours and they said that they saw a big lorry moving things and loading it up. All the time I was worried about some silly man coming to the house with a box, I didn't realise that there was a big lorry outside the house!

Elizabeth Bodkin, Year 9

Ghana

It was the summer holidays and, as usual, I had been shipped off to Ghana, to spend it with Granpie and Granpy. I went on the flight alone, which wasn't enjoyable nor comfortable, travelling for 10 hours in the cheapest seat my parents could get. I am only small but, still, sitting by the window next to someone who is nearly sitting on your knee, because they're very, very overweight, makes the flight really close to being unbearable. When I got off at the other end in Ghana, Granpy my granddad was waiting for me. I ran up to him, arms open, long black hair flying all over my face and gave him a great big hug. After I had detached myself from Granpy, I gazed up into his face to see his big brown eyes, sunken and surrounded by tiny creases. I didn't say it to Granpy but he did look like he was getting older. We came out of the air-conditioned airport and into the warm moist air. At first it takes time to breathe in such hot air; it feels like it is suffocating you. We got into our car and Kuraii, who is Granpy's handyman, drove us to the home I would be spending my holidays in. We got out of the car, after driving for an hour to be greeted by Granpie and her guard, which I had never known her to have. Swish and some of the other maids came out to greet me, but Swish was my favourite maid, and she looked after me during the holidays. Last year, Granpy bought her a small car so that she could take me where I wanted.

After I had hugged Granpie and she had finished telling me how much I had grown, I ran up to the maids who began tickling me and lifting me. They carried me up to my room, then threw me on the bed. I was laughing so much my tummy hurt and I could barely breathe. After I had said my hellos it was time for a nap. I quickly put on some PJs and wriggled into the clean, cold bed sheets. There was a knock on my door, 'Come in,' I grumbled from my cosy bed. It was Granpie. We hadn't really had a proper chat since my arrival in Ghana, and I didn't feel like one right at that moment as I was starting to suffer from jet lag. Only when Granpie came in she wasn't alone, two men were with her, tall Ghanaians in black outfits. Granpie slowly wandered into my room and sat on the seat next to my bed. 'I would like you to meet Turri, he will be your guard for the summer'; I stared blankly at Granpie, 'Why do I need a guard?' When she replied her head looked full of thought, her brown eyes taking long blinks, then she replied 'It's not as safe here as it used to be, we all have them. Turri is yours and if you see anything you don't like, people near bushes etc...; you must tell him right away.' I wanted to ask loads of questions but I was tired, and this large guard was standing there with a very serious face. Granpie left and I tried to sleep. However, Turri began putting me off. First he stood by the door, then he went over to the window, then he got out a large black walkie talkie and gave three numbers, 723. I got out of bed and he followed my every footstep. I spoke to him in Ghanaian and told him I needed to use the toilet. He waited outside the door and then followed me downstairs to Granpie. 'Granpie can we have a talk?' I slowly waddled, still a little drowsy from my nap, over to her. 'Yes we can. I think I know what you want to talk about. I can't make the guards leave while we talk, but I can take you to a special place where we can chat, and they can wait outside the door.' I followed Granpie. I was confused, and then she took my hand and we went down to the cellar. When we were down there, I saw another door. After a while of Granpie talking to the guards, they waited in the cellar while we went through the mystery door. 'Granpie, I am really scared about what's happening. Why do I have a guard, why is this special room here?' My palms were sweating, my voice was quivering. I knew something wasn't right and I knew I didn't like it. 'Look, I don't

want to frighten you, but there are some bad people looking for a family we are hiding. I can't tell you where they are, but they are on our premises, and if the bad people find out they may not be pleased with us. This room is for emergencies. I thought I could show you, food and all essentials are here'. 'Why are we hiding them?' 'God is watching, good people go to heaven,' Granpie replied, looking up to the ceiling – with a large brown moth flapping around near the light. I would have asked for it to be killed, but Granpie believed that all creatures are God's, and all that is God's is here for a reason.

'I read a book once Granpie, it was called Anne Frank, and they were in hiding,' I said, trying to sound positive as I could see the conversation turning to a dead end. Granpie replied, 'This isn't a book, it's real and it is very important you keep safe. I didn't really want you to come here this summer until things were back to normal but everyone missed you so I had to let you come, Sammico.'

In my mind I couldn't get my head round things, so I decided to ask some serious questions. Without answers I might have a fit, jump off a cliff, even though there isn't one here, or do something secret. I hugged Granpie and left. I had Turri trailing after me, of course, but I went into my room and asked if he could guard me from outside my door. When Turri had left my room, I sat down at a desk Granpy had bought me for studying and took out a sheet of crisp white paper. I began drawing a bird's eye view of the land and houses that Granpy owned. There were three houses – one for us and the others for maids and their families. They stayed with us. Granpy paid them a wage, gave them a home and paid for their children to go to school. However, apart from the maids' house, there were 200 acres of land and they could be anywhere. I suppose you don't know who they are, neither do I really, it is the family we are hiding. I want to find them, you could call it an adventure. Only problem is Turri is always following me like a lost puppy, and 200 acres is going to take me a long time. I thought about saying to Turri, 'Look honey, I don't want to be mean but you are cramping my style.' I am not that kind of person at all so, I will get up really early and then go out hunting for the family alone. Granpie said that it is a family so they might have children for me to play with. I went to bed late that night, looking over drawings of land, then I closed my eyes and pointed to an area on the page. I had chosen this to be my hunting spot for tomorrow's excursions. I woke up at about 6.00am and began poking around my room for something practical to wear. I ended up throwing on an old pair of black shorts and a white t-shirt, which I had left on my last visit. Then I had the task of getting past Turri. He slept on a small bed right outside my door, so it wasn't going to be easy. I eventually crept past and down the stairs, before realising the door was bolted and had about ten men close by, in case of the intruders that were supposed to be coming. I went out of the back door, and within about five seconds, three men came running up to me and asked me where, when and why I was going out of the house. I told them Granpy had made arrangements for me to meet the family we were hiding. Then they escorted me right where they were living; it was about three feet away from where I was standing. Actually in the house, in the kitchen. In one of the small kitchen cupboards. I believed them, now I knew I could sleep and visit them when they weren't asleep. I crept back up to bed to see Turri flapping about outside my bedroom. 'It is ok, I went to the toilet,' I said and wandered into my room, closing the door behind me. My mind kept on thinking, who were they? Why were they hiding? All questions I would get answers to. Then it hit me, I had broken a promise to my grandparents, put my life in danger etc... Soon, I felt so bad I started crying, then Turri came running in with the

knight in shining armour act and we stared blankly at each other, him because I was crying for nothing as far as he was concerned, and me at him for the dramatic entrance. 'What is wrong, miss?' said Turri, looking out of the window. 'I have broken a promise,' I replied, still crying, sitting bolt upright in my bed. 'Broken promises can lead to broken hearts, you must mend them before all trust and love goes!' Turri said, then left the room. I gazed into space for a while then got out of bed, and told Granpy and Granpie my problem. They told me that they still loved me, and told me that the family were hiding because they owed money to bad people, a lot of money, and had come to them because they heard they were good, hearty people. They arranged for me to meet the family. I was very nervous shaking like a leaf, I thought that they might hate me for risking their lives.

I got ready, held Granpy's hand tight and crawled into the kitchen cupboard. It led to a large room with nice furniture etc... There were three young children, a girl my age and a lady. I was introduced to them. The girl my age was called Tamzon. She talked to me for ages and told me her father had been killed and they were next in line if my grandparents had not saved them. I spent the whole summer with Tamzon, and cried when I had to leave. For once, my whole summer holiday had been fantastic. I had made a best friend whom I could treasure in my heart forever. We write to one another all the time. She tells me what's been happening, we send gifts. I appreciate what I have more than ever, especially my family, friends and life.

Emma Frew, Year 9

I was walking, slowly, and I was scared

It was cold and windy, no-one was to be seen, it was dark in the city of New York. The trees were rubbing together, and the wind wound around the leaves on the floor, and around our feet. In the distance I heard the crying of children.

I walked into the darkness, for the crying to stop. There was nothing, except the rustling of the leaves and the noise of my breath, deepening as I got deeper into the forest, there was only silence "Nothing!"

I walked to the end of the dark scary wood to find a group of young boys hanging out, you know chilling, smoking, like boys do. I knew all along that noise wasn't coming from them.

My name is Lucinda and I'm 15 years old and it all started from then. I've been told to never to go into the wood after 11.05pm or you never see the light of day again. I woke to the alarm, it was strange, I know I didn't set it. 11.00pm I read from the clock. The crying of children I heard, I followed the noise to see what it was.

I was walking, slowly, and I was scared. I saw shadows jumping and sneaking around, it was really spooky.

Heather Holland, Year 9

Just before the Carnival

All over town people were putting on their costumes. A line from 'Dressing for the Carnival' by Carol Shields.

I was deciding what I want to be when I knew that answer all along. I admire ballet. I've loved it since I was very little. I dance to express all my emotions that I can't talk about. The feeling of it is just so wonderful. And of course, everyone dances at the carnival.

There was no time to waste. The carnival begins at six o'clock and there's only five hours left to get prepared. I'm so nervous, I've never been to the carnival in this town before as I only moved here one month ago. I feel so tense I don't even know what to wear, not to mention what make up I'm going to put on. I have looked out my window onto the busy street, all I can see are people hurrying, trying to get prepared for this special carnival that only takes place once every three years.

I glanced back to my messy bedroom, my bed was covered with a mountain of colourful delicate-looking clothes, but none of them were suitable for this extraordinary occasion. I wondered if anybody would be as nervous and fussy as I was, but I just knew that I would be really disappointed if I didn't have a chance to go. Before I knew it, I was walking up the thin and narrow stairs towards the door that leads me to my ballet classroom. It was probably because I was worrying too much about what costume I was going to wear this evening that I didn't even notice where I was going. Anyway, I saw Miss Beller when I entered the room, who was my ballet teacher, and I gave her what she asked for last lesson. She told me to put it into the room next door, so I did. I opened the other door but the room was dark so I switched on the light. What came into my vision was just amazing. I gazed at the most magnificent ballet dress I've ever seen. It was so fascinating to look at that I stood there frozen for a minute or two. It's red with pink ribbons wrapped all around it. There were also tiny flowers decorated at the top of the dress, which made it even more delightful to look at. Excitement filled all around me, and my feet just led me to Miss Beller right away. I shut my eyes as tight as I could and prayed that she would lend me that irresistible dress, because I just knew that it would be perfect for the carnival. It seemed years when she finally answered me with a smile on her face. "Yes." All I felt was happiness exploding inside me like fireworks. I gave her a massive hug and thanked her when she added that I had discovered her surprise. She said that she was supposed to give it to me as a graduation present when I finish ballet at the end of the year. I was so pleased that tears filled my eyes and started dripping down my face. I guess that was the best day I had in a long time!

Carol Pau, Year 9