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# 2018 WINTER WRITING CONTEST

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## TEEN & CHILDREN ENTRY WINNERS

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**The Winter Writing Contest is sponsored by the Adult Writers' Group of the Oldham County Public Library. The AWG meets biweekly on Saturdays at the Main Library in LaGrange and is open to all.**

**This year's Writing Contest had two categories for the younger writers in the community. For ages 13-18, flash fiction entries were solicited through the month of January. Submissions had to have the following criteria: Stories needed to be flash fiction (under 2,000 words), and contain three elements added at the author's discretion (a ticket, winter, and the phrase "To put it another way".)**

**For writers ages 12 years and younger, creative essays of 500 words or less based on the prompt "The best thing to do on a winter day is..." were requested. We were particularly impressed that several of the entries for this category not only completed this prompt, but also incorporated the criteria from the Young Adult and Adult categories!**

**Entries were judged anonymously by the Adult Writing Group. For each category, two special awards were given; Most Creative and Best Use of Criteria. Thanks to everyone who participated!**

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# MOST CREATIVE: YOUNG ADULT CATEGORY

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## STRANGER DANGER BUNNY DANGER

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BRIANNA LINDBERG

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Maddie heard the telltale ring of her cellphone, which she'd programmed to sound like Korean pop music, and hit the answer button on the steering wheel.

"Do you have your ticket yet, Maddie?"

"Tonya," Maddie groaned, "I told you I'll get it at the door."

"But what if they're sold out?"

"You're so neurotic! They won't be sold out," Maddie said firmly, "Is Dean there?"

"Yeah," Tonya said, "I made him pre-order his tickets. He brought his little sister because his parents couldn't find a babysitter. We're drinking coffee right now."

"Okay, I'll see you in a few."

"Kay, bye."

She reached Tonya's house a few minutes later and parked on the road, then locked her car from the front porch as she stomped the powdery snow off her boots on the welcome mat. The door flew open before she could knock, and Dean's little sister jumped out at her.

"Boo!"

Maddie screamed in mock horror, before scooping up the giggling girl.

"Hi, Ruthie," she said, grinning and fingering the five-year-old's blonde braids as she closed the door with her foot.

"Hey, Maddie," Dean's casual grin lit up his face as he came down the hall, shaking his dirty blonde hair out of his eyes. "Ruthie didn't scare you too badly, did she?"

"Oh, she's fine," Maddie smiled at the beaming Ruthie. Maddie set her on the ground and she ran ahead of them as Dean and Maddie made their way to the living room at a more sedate, mature pace.

“You’re here!” Tonya said, jumping up from the sofa, “Ready to go, guys?”

“Ready as I’ll ever be,” Maddie agreed.

“So, Tonya,” Dean said, as he helped Ruthie into her jacket, “Remind me again why we’re walking to this movie, instead of driving.”

“Because it’s good exercise,” Tonya announced.

Dean rolled his eyes, “Besides that? After all, that’s what gyms are for. And gyms are warmer,” purposefully emphasizing the last word, he opened the back door.

As they made their way outside, Ruthie ran ahead of them, romping in the soft snow. “Well, to put it another way,” Tonya explained energetically, “we are walking because walking in nature is good for the mind and soul, and if we can walk through the woods, why wouldn’t we?”

“I don’t know, maybe because it’s below freezing,” Dean said with mock sarcasm.

“I’ll get you a gym membership next Christmas,” Maddie put in before Tonya could respond.

“Ruthie,” Dean called, ignoring Maddie, “not too far ahead.”

“I’m not too far,” Ruthie called back.

The conversation of her older brother’s friends faded behind her as she continued to scamper forward. Something in the snow caught her eye as she made her way into the trees.

A shiny thing.

A silver thing.

A bunny!

Ruthie laughed. She liked bunnies. And shiny, silver bunnies were even better. “Here, shiny bunny!” she called, squatting down and stretching her fingers towards it.

Not budging, it twitched its nose.

“Come here!” Ruthie implored, waddling forward without standing.

Spooked, the bunny skittered a few feet away. Ruthie stood up and ran towards it. Now alarmed, the bunny bolted away. “Shiny bunny, come back!”

The bunny zipped away through the snow, but Ruthie was in no mood to be defeated. She sprinted as fast as her tiny legs could carry her, and somehow managed to keep up with the silver rabbit, even as snow began to fall heavily around them, blurring the landscape.

“Come back, bunny! I won’t hurt you!”

Not realizing how far from her brother she was getting, Ruthie ran and ran until she grew tired and slowed to catch her breath. It streamed in cold puffs as she panted, and the bunny circled back around to watch her. Ruthie glared at it.

“Come here,” she demanded.

The bunny sat right where it was and didn’t come any closer. Ruthie looked around, seeing and hearing no sign of her brother.

“Dean?”

There was no response.

“Dean?” she called out, louder now.

Still she heard and saw no sign of her older brother. “Dean!” she screamed.

In the silence that followed, Ruthie realized that she was lost. She suddenly felt cold, tired...and lonely. She began crying, sitting down in the snow and wrapping her arms around her knees. Then she felt a soft touch on her face and jumped. The bunny had come to sit beside her. It was a big bunny. Almost as big as she was. She threw her arms around it and cried into its silver fur. “I want my brother,” she whimpered.

The bunny’s nose nuzzled consolingly into her cheek, then moved off again, hopping a few feet away, then turning back as if waiting for her. Ruthie rose to her feet and followed it deeper into the woods.

It seemed to Ruthie that they walked forever, but the silver bunny didn’t stop, so she didn’t stop either. Finally, they reached a clearing... with a house.

A house made of pretzels?

Yes.

The house was made of large, hard, pretzel sticks, like salty Lincoln logs. Was this a dream? Or perhaps a fairytale? “Is this your home?” she timidly asked the bunny.

Standing up on its silvery hind legs, it twitched its nose at her. Then it turned and hopped to the door of the house. The door handle was too high for Ruthie to reach, but

luckily, there was a bunny-door lower to the ground, made out of a large grid-pretzel. It went through the door, and because Ruthie was almost the same size, she trailed after it. Inside, the house was warm and cozy, with a fire crackling contentedly in its pretzel fireplace.

“This is a nice house,” said Ruthie, moving to the fire and struggling out of her coat.

The bunny didn’t respond.

Ruthie turned around. The shiny silver bunny was gone. Instead there was a tall old man standing rigidly above her. He had a bristly gray beard, short gray hair, and was wearing a shiny silver suit the same color as the bunny’s fur. His eyes were silver as well, piercing and penetrating. Shrieking and almost falling into the fireplace, she stumbled to the farthest corner and cowered there, trembling, her blue eyes wide with terror as she pressed her small body against the pretzel wall.

“Shh,” he said soothingly, proffering the plate of cookies he was holding. “Have a cookie. I won’t hurt you.”

Ruthie looked at the cookies. They were chocolate chip. She loved chocolate chip cookies. And his smile was warm and kind. It looked friendly and trustworthy. Kneeling by the fire and holding out the plate he continued, “I have warm milk, too. Do you like milk?”

Ruthie nodded, taking another pace forward.

“Don’t be afraid, little girl. What’s your name?”

“Ruthie.”

“That’s a pretty name. Come here, Ruthie. My name is Charlie.”

Charlie, Ruthie thought. That didn’t sound intimidating. That sounded pretty normal. She moved closer, taking three halting steps this time before she remembered what her parents always told her. “Don’t take food from strangers. Strangers are dangerous. Stay with your brother. He will protect you.”

“Don’t worry, Ruthie. Come have cookies and milk.”

Ruthie hadn’t noticed that she was hungry, but now that she could smell the cookies her stomach growled. Deciding Charlie was trustworthy, and that he wasn’t really a stranger, since they’d traveled through the woods together when he was a bunny, Ruthie bounced over, grabbed a cookie and shoved it into her mouth. Charlie smiled comfortingly as she chomped down, smearing chocolate all around her face the way all children managed to do when enjoying their dessert.

“Milk?” he asked, offering her the glass of warm milk.

She took it from him in both of her messy hands and gulped down half of the contents before even pausing for breath. When she lowered the glass, she had a milky white moustache, but she didn't seem to notice as she set the milk on the pretzel grid table and took another cookie. Her tongue flickered out and licked her lips relatively clean, then she hiccupped loudly as she bit a large chunk out of the cookie. Charlie laughed.

"You're a good girl, Ruthie," he said, sitting cross-legged beside her.

"Why do you live in a pretzel house in the middle of the woods?" Ruthie mumbled with a full mouth.

"Because I'm a bit of a misanthrope," Charlie told her.

Ruthie nodded knowingly, then ate another half of a cookie and inquired innocently, "What's that?"

"It means I don't get along with other people very well," he explained, "but I love children," he added, handing her another cookie before she was even finished with her third.

Ruthie crammed both it and the remaining half of her other cookie into her chocolatey mouth, making her cheeks puff out like a chipmunk's. Charlie laughed as the girl struggled to close her mouth.

"Not too fast, Ruthie," he warned, "or you'll choke."

Ruthie, impossibly, chewed and gulped down the cookies and shook her head.

"I don't choke," she said, taking another cookie and biting into it. "These are good cookies," she said, the words were slurred and difficult to recognize due to her mouth being so full. "Did you make them?"

"Yes, dear," Charlie said, "I did."

Ruthie finished yet another cookie and chugged some more milk. When she lowered the glass, she belched vociferously and giggled. "Have another," Charlie invited, proffering the plate once more.

As Ruthie took a cookie in each hand, Charlie snatched her around her waist with his monstrous hands and lifted her feet clear of the ground. Ruthie screeched in terror as Charlie bared his teeth in a snarl.

"Help!" she shrilled, beating at Charlie's hands with her tiny fists.

Charlie tossed her screaming, flailing body into the fireplace and shut the pretzel grate, trapping her inside. Ruthie wailed and yelled and hammered at the grate, but it didn't

budge. Charlie's laughter sounded malicious and terrifying now, his eyes dark and menacing, and Ruthie started wailing. Charlie cackled as the flames licked around his soon-to-be-meal, but his mirth was abruptly cut short. The girl wasn't burning. In fact, she was only crying because she was afraid, not being cooked.

Frozen in horror, he stared as her tears rolled down her cheeks and landed in the fire, and then flared into multicolored steam. "Of all the girls in the world," he muttered tragically, "I found the only one that could best my magic."

Then the steam swirled around Ruthie and she disappeared.

In the same instant, Ruthie appeared in the snow, still crying.

"Ruthie!"

Ruthie's head came up. That was Dean's voice.

"Dean!" she shouted, her eyes desperately scanning the trees around her through the heavy snowfall.

Seconds later, Dean's face appeared as he scooped her up in his strong arms. "Ruthie! I was so worried! Where's your jacket? What happened?"

Ruthie hugged him tightly, burying her face in his shirt to hide her tears.

"Hey, hey," he said soothingly, "it's okay. Let's get you back to the house."

He put her on the ground, stripped off his jacket and bundled her in it. Through the trees, he yelled, "Hey, guys! I found her! She's okay!"

He picked her up again and made his way to the trail where Tonya and Maddie were waiting anxiously. "Let's get back to your house, Tonya. We can see the movie some other time."

Back in the house, in an attempt to comfort the frightened girl, Tonya brought out a plate of cookies from the cupboard and set it on the table. Instantly, eyes wide, Ruthie emitted a frantic, high pitched cry, pointing frantically at the cookies. "The bunny man will eat us!" she screeched.

Dean gathered her up in his arms and shushed her. "You're safe now. Just eat a cookie, and tell us what happened."

"No! I'll never eat another cookie again!"

And she never did.

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# BEST USE OF CRITERIA: YOUNG ADULT CATEGORY

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## THE BOX

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VIOLET SAMUELS

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Every girl is pretty. But if they were flowers, she was Christmas lights, and she was beautiful.

“It’s a crime to make anyone work Christmas eve.”

She whirled around, and her smile lit up the room. “Hey! What are you doing here?” She didn’t wait for an answer but ran around the counter. She looked like she was going to hug him, and he leaned in but she stopped short right in front of him.

“What’s in the box?”

“The box? Oh yeah,” He looked like an idiot. “that box.”

She laughed. “It’s huge! How could you forget about it?”

It was pretty eye-catching, it came up to his waist and was wrapped in bright paper, with a big silver bow on top. He scooted it towards her.

“Open it.”

“Noooooo, you didn’t have to get me anything!”

“I wanted to.”

She looked up at him guiltily. “I didn’t get you anything.”

He let out a sigh and rolled his eyes like he was exasperated. “You’re making a big deal out of this, I swear it’s not a big deal. You might not even like it. But the suspense is killing me, so just open it.”

She rolled her eyes too, but she started to open it. He could tell she was curious. She tore off the paper, then used her key to open up the box.

“Oh my gosh...” She laughed as she lifted out a giant brown teddy bear with a green bow tie.



“I hope you like it.”

“I love it.” She looked up at him with a glowing smile. “Thank you.”

And just like that, he was addicted.

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He was addicted to giving her whatever she wanted, anything to make her smile. He got her chocolates for Valentines, concert tickets for her birthday, he sent flowers to her house and every time they went out he got her candy or ice cream or coffee. Every time she'd tell him he didn't have to, but she gave him that smile and he knew he really did. That smile was all the reward he needed, and he wanted to see that smile for the rest of his life.

On what would be the last snow day of the season, he got all bundled up to go to her house. He looked in the mirror on his way out the door and sighed. He looked like the Michelin Man. But it didn't matter, because when he got to her house she ran out the door to meet him, and insecurities melted away. They stayed outside for hours, just laughing and playing in the perfect white winter. Just before they went inside she wanted to make snow angels; she plopped down in the snow and he laid down beside her and kissed her bright red nose.

“You make a beautiful Rudolph.”

She rolled her eyes and opened her mouth to make a retort, he kissed her instead.

...

“I just worry you're going to go broke spending money on me.” They were walking down Main street looking in shop windows, the snow was melting, the sky was dreary, and the sidewalk was muddy under their feet.

“So what if I do? You're worth it.”

She screwed up her nose. “I guess, but...”

“No buts. You're worth every penny.”

“Okay maybe I am, that doesn't mean you don't still need that money for other things.”

“Hey, why don't you let me worry about all that okay?”

“I can't help worrying about you.”

He stopped and wrapped her up in a hug. "And I love you for it. But I have a roof over my head and food in my stomach, so you don't need to worry. Even still, I'd give up all that in a second, just to have you in my arms."

She gave out a long exasperated sigh. "You cheesy, crazy, impossible man. What am I going to do with you?"

"Just love me and never let me go, that's all I ask."

"I won't."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

...

These, and a hundred other memories played across his mind like a movie, they flitted across the back of his eyelids every time he closed his eyes.

The look in her eyes right before he kissed her.

Their silly inside jokes.

Watching her while she watched the movie.

Late night phone calls.

Their first kiss, first I love you's, first fight.

Their last kiss, last I love you's, last fight.

He had to stop himself there. He remembered it all, every little thing, and they flitted across the back of his eyelids every time he closed his eyes... but he couldn't watch her walk away again. It was almost funny, he could see it so perfectly, but yet it still wasn't quite real.

It was Christmas eve, and it looked like it was going to be a white Christmas. Snowflakes danced in the wind and settled to the ground as he watched out his window. He was watching for her. He hadn't heard from her in a while, but she was coming today, he knew it. He knew her. They'd been through a lot this year, not all of it good, but she couldn't just forget everything. Everything they'd done, everything he'd given her, all their plans and promises.

He sat down on the sofa and positioned himself so he still had a good view out the window. He hadn't slept much last night; his eyes felt bloodshot and his muscles were sore and heavy. After a few minutes he closed his eyes, just for a second, to see her face again.

...

On Christmas morning, if you were watching from the street, this is what you would've seen:

He opens his door. For a second he just stands there, in striped pajamas, coffee in hand, looking out at the snow dusting the ground. It's so quiet. It's Christmas.

Then he sees it. It's a little ragged now, like it's been collapsed. It's got a crease in the middle, and a flap torn off.

It's a box.

It's *the* box.

And in it are concert and movie tickets, earrings and a bracelet, a vase, a heart-shaped box, a giant teddy bear with a big green bow... and a diamond ring.

To put it another way, it was a box full of all his hopes and dreams.

His heart, and everything else he'd ever given her.

A box of memories.

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# MOST CREATIVE: CHILDRENS CATEGORY

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## HIBERNATION IS FOR WIMPS

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KAEDEN LINDBERG

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The best thing to do in winter is to hibernate. Or so my family thinks. They love searching for and storing nuts all year long in a secret little hideout. When the weather turns cold, they cover themselves with their big fluffy tails and sleep, and sleep, and sleep. I thought so too, until I found a popsicle stick. Now, that may not sound very exciting, but I thought it was amazing because an idea hit me with the force of a battering ram. I immediately sprinted to the giant hill next to my nest, set down my stick, which I called the Awesome Hoverboard of Doom!

On the hill, I took a few steps back from the Awesome Hoverboard of Doom, bounded forward and jumped onto it. I screamed so loud and crazy; it was SOOOOOO fun. I was sliding down at what felt like the speed of light! I knew this was my new thing to do in winter. Ditch sleeping! This was amazing! I scampered to my family and woke them all up.

After they heard my story, they looked at me like I was covered in neon pink pancakes.

“You woke us up for that?!” My brother shouted, as much as a squirrel can shout.

“And you could break your leg!” the rest of my family chorused their agreement.

“Seriously?” “You’re gonna die!” “Now It’ll take us at least two weeks to fall asleep again!!!!” “So lame...”

I retreated back to the hill, covering my ears and yelling,  
“AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!”

Well, I thought, they’re the ones that are missing out.

I slid and climbed up and down the hill for weeks, and it never got old. Until I proved my family right. I was flying down the hill one afternoon, and by now I thought of myself as a pro, swerving around rocks and plants. Then I closed my eyes. I thought I had the hill memorized, every rock, every flower, every tree, down to the last blade of grass.

Then I hit a rock. Everything went in slow motion as my board splintered and snapped, and I fell on a different rock on an angle so my leg broke, blood poured out onto the snow, and I passed out.

I woke up to INSANE pain, and it took my family at least twenty minutes to hear my blood curdling screams and rush to my rescue. It was actually good that I woke them up before, as they weren't fully asleep yet.

There is a moral to this story.

Trust your family and their judgment.

Have fun, but do it safely. Don't just have common sense, listen to it. Don't do everything alone. Don't. Don't. Don't. But that's not all.

Do things! Don't sit at home watching YouTube, eating popcorn, drinking Coke, eating Takis chips and not doing anything useful.

GET A LIFE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

MAKE FRIENDS!!!!!!!!!!!

HAVE FUN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

This is a great motto, and one everyone should follow.

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# BEST USE OF CRITERIA: CHILDRENS CATEGORY

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## THE SNOWMAN

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MARY ELIZABETH BROECKER

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The best thing to do on a winter's day is drinking hot chocolate with a candy cane. I like to have hot chocolate after building a snowman. My snowman has a carrot nose and eyes made out of coal. I was afraid the snowman would get cold, so I got a hat and a scarf for it. When the moon came out, the stars came out with it. My snowman looked up and decided I'm gonna go see 🧑‍🚀. The north pole is a far piece away from Kentucky, but I think I can make it the snowman thought. And he did. To put it another way, he took my hand and flew me to the North Pole. When we got to the north pole and saw Santa, I sat on his lap and ask him for a ticket to the next Louisville girls basketball game. That made my snowman very happy, and excited and asked Santa if he could give him a ticket to the basketball game. So, when the snowman and I got to the basketball game he melted! 😞  
The end!!! This was made in The USA