

# The Redbird Reader

Fall 2024



# Fall 2024 Contest

The Fall VHS writing contest was held in two divisions: one for jr. high students and one for high school students. The theme, appropriate to the month of December, was to write a story in any genre about “the impact of a gift.” Stories were judged blindly by staff volunteers.

For this season’s contest, we are also delighted to present cash prizes to the winners, courtesy of Petefish, Skiles & Co. Bank! Many thanks to this local business for sponsoring the contest.

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# **Fall 2024 Winners**

## **Jr. High Winners**

### **3rd Place**

Shelby Long, “Brittney’s Amazing Adventure“

### **2nd Place**

Sophia Horton, “The Necklace”

### **1st Place**

Kylen Snedecker, “The Last Message”

## **High School Winners**

### **3rd Place (tied)**

Drea Edwards, “The Push”

Maggie Parlier, “The Bigger Picture”

### **2nd Place**

Adelea Anderson, “Once Upon a Time”

### **1st Place**

Charley Kapper, “The Unexpected”

# “Brittney’s Amazing Adventure”

**by Shelby Long, 8th grade**

One day a girl named Brittney went into the woods for some fun. While in the woods she noticed a light that kept showing up and decided to follow it. The light led her to a cottage. When she went inside, she saw a door and went through it. On the other side was the exact same cottage she first went into. But when she went outside it was a different world and didn’t know where she was. Then she saw a present and picked it up. It was from her mom and when she opened it up there was just a watch. She then realized it was a sword and a shield.

“I wonder why mom would give this to me now and not in person?”, said Brittney.

BAM!!! There was a loud noise and Brittney went into action. Then a sword came out of nowhere. She saw her friend Anna who had a sword and was injured and looking at something. It was a typhon (youngest son of Gaea. It is a monster with hundreds of heads and claws) and it was coming after her. Brittney didn’t know what to do and ran towards it with her sword and climbed on its back and ripped a head off and she fell to the ground. Next thing she knew was she was in a random place and couldn’t move. Then she woke up and saw a weird looking person and realized it was a satyr . But it was Anna but as a satyr and Brittney freaked out.

“Anna, where are your legs, and why are you a donkey or horse?”, asked Brittney.

“Um, actually I am half goat not a donkey.”, said Anna.

“Where am I at?”, asked Brittney.

“We are a magical place called Narnia and there are creatures we don’t see in the real world,” said Anna.

“Why are we here and how did I get here?”, asked Brittney.

“By going through the magic door in the old cottage,” explained Anna.

“Let’s go explore the woods, I have never been here.”, said Brittney.

So then they went off to go explore. While walking Brittney noticed another present so she picked it up and opened it. When she opened it there was a baseball cap, just a normal hat.

“Why would mom give this to me?”, asked Brittney.

“It could be a sign and are you sure it is from your mom?”, asked Anna.

“Who else could it be from because I don’t know my dad.”, said Brittney.

“But it could be from your dad so you might want to look to see who it is from.”, said Anna.

So Brittney looked at the tag and it did say it was from her dad but it only said “from dad”.

“Why would he give me a hat when he has never talked to me or never seen me?”, asked Brittney.

“Try it on first before you ask me.”, said Anna.

“Um... ok.”, said Brittney.

“AHHH!! I CAN’T SEE MY BODY!!”, screamed Brittney.

“That’s because it is an invisible hat,” said Anna.

Ok that would totally make me feel better. What else are you going to tell me that my dad is a hero or has something to do with gods.”, said Brittney.

“Umm... actually yes. Yes Brittney.”, said Anna.

“WHAT. My dad is one of the gods. Is that why there was a typhoon attacking us?”, asked Brittney.

“Yes and that is why your dad gave you that hat and your mom gave you that watch, it was to help you just in case anything like this happens.”, said Anna.

“I can’t believe this is happening in real life,” said Brittney.

“Do you know who my dad is?”, asked Brittney.

“Umm... maybe?”, said Anna.

“Will you tell me?”, asked Brittney.

“Your father is ... is Ares.”, said Anna.

“Isn’t he the god of war?”, asked Brittney.

“Yes he is.”, said Anna.

Then they walked off and explored more of the woods until they saw something. It was another present and there was something different about this one. This one had a note and it was from Ares. The note said “Dear daughter, I hope you aren’t mad at me or your mother for not telling you but it was tricky and difficult. The reason I gave you these presents is because it will help you when you go to camp half blood. It is a camp for kids like you who have a godly parent they can go there to be trained to fight monsters. Hope you have fun. P.S. I already told your mom about this and she is ok with it.”

“What should I do?”, asked Brittney.

“Go with your gut.”, said Anna.

“I think I will go to camp,” said Brittney.

“Ok I will contact the camp and let them know,” said Anna.

Then they walked off into the woods towards camp.

# “The Necklace”

by Sophia Horton, 8th grade

Cindy Grace was calm. Cindy Grace was cool and collected. Cindy Grace was definitely not being watched. At least, that’s what she thought.

After a long, hard day at work, she slumped down on the couch, only to feel something sharp poking her in the side. She sat up as fast as she could, remembering what was in her pocket. She reached in, and her hand closed around a cool piece of metal and a delicate silver chain. A necklace. Along with it, a small notecard with an address on it. She thought back to earlier that day, when she’d first received the gift.

Cindy Grace had been walking home from work, when she’d been stopped by an elderly woman. The woman was short, with straggled hair the color of porcelain, and a wrinkled face. The woman had grabbed Cindy Grace’s arm in the middle of the street, and no one seemed to give a thought to it.

It couldn’t be that everyone thought they were related. They clearly weren’t; by blood at least. The elderly woman was pale, and thin, and had quite straight hair; whereas Cindy Grace’s skin was the deep, rich color of coffee, and her hair was black and extremely textured with curls.

For a moment, neither moved as the woman's hand locked around Cindy Grace's forearm. The two made eye contact, and Cindy Grace felt as though the woman was staring into her soul, with her cold, lifeless eyes. Then, the woman pulled something from the folds of her dress, forced it into Cindy Grace's hand, and let her go, walking off into the crowd.

For the rest of the day, Cindy Grace had walked around feeling off. All she thought about throughout her shift was what had earlier happened that day. All day she had had this foreboding feeling that something terrible would happen, and it just got worse and worse.

She sat up, and turned on the light to inspect the pendant, tossing the notecard to the side. It still felt cold, which was odd, considering it had been in her pocket all day, but Cindy brushed it off; after all, there were weirder things about the thing than its temperature.

There was incredible detailing on the pendant. There was beautiful detailing with what Cindy Grace guessed was opal; she wasn't good with gemstones, but a couple of her friends were really into that stuff. The opal was in the shape of a star; but it didn't feel right to her. It was one of those stars that teachers draw in pen on your paper if you do good; where it wasn't filled in in the middle. A pentagram.

Now, Cindy Grace wasn't stupid; she knew that many people considered pentagrams to be extremely bad luck and taboo. But Cindy Grace was logical. In her mind, if she had gotten those stars on her papers all her life, and she didn't have bad luck, why should a necklace of one make any difference?



The next morning, when Cindy Grace was getting dressed, she saw the pentagram necklace and clasped it on. That weird ominous feeling from the day before was completely gone. Normally, she would have found that suspicious, but right now, she was just happy for the feeling to be gone.

As she pulled her car keys out of her pocket, there was just a second where she couldn't move her fingers. Cindy Grace looked down at her hand. It had an almost translucent look to it, before it died out and looked back to normal.

For the first time, Cindy Grace looked closely at the notecard with the address, sitting on the side table. She looked closely. She decided to go and check it out. Her shift didn't start for a while, anyway.

Cindy Grace got into her car, and her left arm froze for a moment. She hesitantly looked down. The translucent-ness had spread further up, as she stared at it, it slowly retreated.

She drove the whole way to the address, in fear, scared it would happen to her foot, and she wouldn't be able to stop. Though, to Cindy Grace's pleasant surprise, nothing bad happened.

As she pulled into the driveway of the address, Cindy Grace peered out of her car window. It wasn't anything noticeable. Just a run-down looking house, in a run-down neighborhood. Most people would drive by it without blinking an eye.

Cindy Grace had you double check the notecard, just to make sure she had the correct address. She stepped out of the car, and shut the door behind her. As she walked through the front yard, she saw beautiful glass statues of people and animals. They were creepy, and they all had weird imprints around the base of their necks, as though part of the glass had been chipped at. She found that eerie, but took a step forward. Her left foot wouldn't move. She looked down at it, expecting the odd translucent-ness to retreat, but when she looked down, she was horrified. It was spreading up her left leg, and had started on her right foot now too. She tried to turn to reach the door, but she couldn't move her core now.

It moved up faster. She couldn't breathe now. As it moved up her neck, she looked down. The necklace was the only thing that hadn't become translucent. It was stuck to her neck. She tried to look down, but she couldn't anymore. She was glass.

The witch tenderly opened the door, realizing Cindy Grace had turned to glass. She unclasped the necklace, and tugged on it. It wouldn't come off. The witch jerked the pendant off, and some tiny chips of glass came off with it. She'd have to sweep them up later. That was the most annoying part of the job.

# **“The Last Message”**

**by Kylene Snedeker, 7th grade**

“Ding,” the bell sounded as someone pressed the little button to get some assistance. “Hello, what can I do for you today?” the front desk person asked, that worked at the local adoption home.

“Hi, I would like to adopt one of your kids that you have here. I would like to pick the one out,” I answered in a polite manner. Right then I saw a teenage boy, that was very kind, and he asked the person working the front desk if she needed any help around the house. I knew that was the kid I wanted.

”Actually, can I adopt this young, and kind young man right here?” I asked.

“Of course, I bet he would love to live with you. His name is Justin. He is so polite, and will help you when you need it,” she said, answering my question. A couple of minutes later she said that I was able to take him home tomorrow afternoon. Then I went home to get ready.

I love to help people, I thought as I started to get his room ready. After that, I went to bed so I could be in my best mood when I picked him up. All night I dreamed about how I will not let him down. I want to be there for him during his good parts and hardships during his life.

The next day, I went to go get him. He was so happy and uplifting, but the best thing was that he was helpful. Justin first helped me get ready for dinner, then he helped me pick up and clean the countertops. That night, he talked about how his parents just left him, and never tried to reach out to him. He didn't show sadness when he was telling me about his past life, but I could tell he was very upset.

The more I listened to him, it sounded like he lived a very poor life, but that never changed his attitude. He was a very good decision maker, for being 16, though he never really had the choices to make bad decisions. He loved his new home, and his new bedroom. Justin thought it was the coolest thing ever to have your own computer in your own room. He told me how he used to have to share an old computer, and how he had to share a bedroom with all the other kids at the adoption center. At about 10 pm, I told him that he had to go to bed, because we have to wake up early tomorrow and go to church.

\* \* \*

Two years later, I had learned a lot about him. He was done with school, and he wanted to go to college. I paid for him to go to Stanford University for a couple years, so he was starting to pack up. I told him that I would be visiting him every couple of months. He wanted to get a business administration degree, so he could set up his own business. I wanted him to be successful just like I was. I am 47, and I am already retired.

Later that day, Justin stated, "Zach, thank you for everything you have done for me, but the most important thing of all is that you taught me to help people. When I get older, I am going to help people like how you helped others like me. I will miss you when I have to leave tonight to go to California."

"Justin, you didn't have to say that, but I am very glad that you like to help people," I said to him in a grateful way.

"I know, but it is true. I want to thank you for everything you have done for me, even though these words can't thank you enough."

"All I hope is that you treat yourself and others in a kind manner, and try to help people."

Later that day, he got into the car that was bringing him to his dorm room, to get ready for his school year. We were both sad and happy at the same time. I knew we were going to see each other soon.

\* \* \*

(Justin's Perspective)

"Ring, ding, ding, ring!" my phone sounded as it went off when I was in my dorm doing homework.

"Hello, is this Justin I am speaking with?" the person asked.

"Yes, how can I help you?" I asked.

"Today, I am sorry to tell you that your legal guardian from ages 16 to 18, Zach Irin, passed this afternoon. You are talking to Mandy, who works at the memorial hospital in Bellville. He got into a really bad car crash on his way to see you. His last words were to go see his secretary," Mandy said over the phone.

“I will book the closest flight which looks to be leaving in 2 hours. I can’t believe this has happened. Can you please call his secretary and tell him I am on my way?” I asked.

Now I am on the plane trying to hold back from crying. I was so sad after Zach passed, that I would throw up. I landed in Indianapolis, where his secretary, John, is supposed to pick me up. I then saw him.

Later that day, I found out that he left me 150 million dollars. He also wrote me a note that looked pretty old. He told me about how great of a person I was, and how I need to save this money. After I read that, I knew what I was going to do with that money. I was going to do what Zach did to me, help people. I went to the hospital he died in and gave them 100 million dollars to help people that need it.

During the rest of my life, I have thought about him a lot. I will never forget what he did for me, and what he did for others too.

# “The Push”

by Drea Edwards, 10th grade

With the toll of the morning bell, Emery flipped the sign on the door. Crowds were already forming along the street. Within the first hour, business was starting to look in Emery’s favor. She had sold 5 paintings so far, certainly yielding enough money for the next week’s meals and supplies of the shop.

Emery noticed the crowds continue to grow, and from the wave of faces emerged a woman. She looked into the window, saw Emery, and promptly slinked inside. For all that Emery could see, she was not going to be just any normal customer. She wore a crimson cloak, shroud in ringlets of gold and silver. Her hair was to the same standards of regalness.

She walked to Emery’s newest painting and pointed.

“I want this one. I’ll give you 15 coins.”

Emery was stunned. That could cover the paints and canvas, but accounted toward none of the time spent on it. “I’m sorry, but I can’t just sell it for that little. Supplies are expensive, and these pieces take time. I can definitely bargain with you, but I need to make sure I can stay afloat.”

“Nope, 15 coins. That is what I offer. I purchase things made with passion, and this certainly isn’t one of those things. Yes, it is a beauty, but you clearly have a heart yearning for change.”

.“Look, there’s a reason I had to shift to these paintings. Sure, they aren’t much fun to make, but they keep food on the table and typically make happy customers. I wish I could return to my quicker portraits, but honestly, I never see that happening.

At this, the woman sneered. She muttered something under her breath, and suddenly the world went quiet. Outside, the previously sunny day shifted to pure darkness. Just as suddenly as the events had occurred, everything went back to normal, and the woman was gone, but where she had just stood lay a rune and a note: “Art should be made for the love of creation, not money. You have undeniable talent for this art, so use it. I hope this gift will help you return to genuinely using yours.” The rune was intricate, covered in swirls and hatches. In the center rested a red gemstone. It resembled a heart.

The moment Emery picked up the stone, the crowd roused again, and another customer entered. He was an older man, and Emery quickly clocked him as a returning customer. The man promptly grabbed a painting of a garden, one inspired from the park not too far from the shop. This one alone took three weeks of planning and had plagued her as she tried to perfect it. Not an enjoyable one to make, but alas that is what her job had become.

“I am happy for you, you know. Since you found this new style, you really have prospered. Before I get this, I just want to know, how long does it take to make something like this? Also, how do you get these colors to really pop?”



Thankful for the returning normalcy, Emery was happy to answer. “My pieces could take about half an hour, but for the ones that actually sell, they can take weeks of planning. This painting is around 120 coins.”

The man’s eye’s hazed, and just for a moment, his mind seemed to go blank. Then, he scoured. “That much for this? It’s dull and lacks meaning. I see no love in the subject,” he muttered, basically stomping out the door. Emery was shaken and disturbed by the man’s sudden shift. This stone is definitely cursed, I will need to get rid of it tonight. By the time she had looked up, more customers were already forming a line.

They all seemed to have that same shift. They would enter the conversation pleased by the work, even praising details or subjects. Then, once told the time or effort needed for each piece, they would lose interest, casting it aside and exiting.

In the corner of the room a girl flipped through one of Emery’s more obscure boxes. It held her dearer paintings, ones of the any beautiful souls she had met over the years. Each one had a story, and each one a reminder of when she first started painting. Portraits really were her favorite pieces. However, they usually held no meaning to customers, so nobody would buy them. “Those are actually my oldest pieces, nothing good I promise you,” she warned. Despite what Emery had said, the girl brought it to the desk. The girl was awed, acting like the quick scribbles and blobs were the best things she had ever seen. “I shouldn’t sell this to you,” Emery continued, “I spent maybe an hour on this piece. It was merely a warm up.”

“You’re selling yourself short,” the girl argued. “The craftsmanship in this is far beyond anything I could have imagined. The way you capture the man’s eyes, it shows your attention to detail and fondness of the art. I certainly see their worth” She tossed a coin bag. In it was more than Emery would have ever priced even her harder paintings, let alone the one she had just handed off.

To her confusion, Emery saw more customers begin to look at the old, previously hidden boxes. They were starting to become her best sellers, and as the day continued, Emery realized she could actually keep doing what she loved. She glanced at the rune and smiled. “I guess all I needed was a little push,” she whispered.

# “The Bigger Picture”

by Maggie Parlier, 10th grade

How would you describe a gift? Some people may say that a gift is something physical that a loved one gives to you and makes you smile. Some people may say that a gift is a natural ability or talent. Although both of these are true, I seem to receive a gift every day.

“Are you awake honey?!” yells my mother through the other side of my door. The rain is gently cascading down onto my roof as I rub my eyes and get out of bed in the morning. I slowly rise out of bed, stretching as I force myself to get up. Leaving my room, my mom is waiting for me outside of the door as she does each morning to say, “Goodmorning!” with such a gentle smile on her face waiting for me to greet and smile back at her in the same manner. Some mornings I don’t see how special these moments are, and some I smile back and feel a warm sensation in my chest. Either way, this is just the thin wrapping on the outside of the gift that I will soon come to realize they provide me with.

My Dad is in the kitchen making his morning coffee as he does every day. Some days he makes two just so my sister and I get a full cup when we wake up. He makes sure there is always enough left for us, without even thinking about it, and even does our laundry before we wake up. We share a smile and then go on with our morning. “Have a good day at school” he yells to me as I walk back towards my room to get ready. How come I don’t realize the impact that these small gestures have on my day?

The next morning I wake up and see that my mom has already left for work. It is a little bit more quiet in the house, a little colder. There is still a pot of coffee sitting in the machine waiting for me, but my dad has already left also. I guess I didn't realize how much a simple "good morning" had on my day. I go on with my day, repeating the same patterns as I did the day before. What if the next morning I said good morning first? What if this time I brought a smile to their faces as they do mine every day? I can give them that love too, I realized.

I arrive home after school, and this time I decide to clean the kitchen. My mom cleans every day after work, but just imagine how happy she would be to come home to a clean house and just take this one day off. She comes home to her favorite candle burning in the kitchen and the sink empty. I don't tell her who did this because the truth is that I would prefer her not to know it was me. How fortunate am I to be able to see her day brighten just because of this small gesture.

My parents and sisters give me so much love every day that I become used to it. I expect that "good morning" and the pot of coffee, but that is not just kindness that they give to all of us. That is love. I lay down in my bed that night and think of all the small things that they do for me every day. I realize that their small gifts of love are what my world spins around each day. How did I get so lucky and get to receive this special gift each and every day? From now on, I will make sure that they get little gifts of love each day and maybe they can see how special they are to me.

# “Once Upon a Time”

by Adelea Anderson, 11th grade

“It all began on a dark stormy night” Skylar began. Logan began to whine.

“Can you be original for once in your life?” Skylar laughed, tucking him tighter into the bed. “It’s not my fault someone can’t go to sleep without a story. Everytime I babysit it’s the same old thing. Skylar, read me a book. Skylar tell me a bedtime story. Skylar, Skylar Skylar.” Out of the corner of her eye, she saw a flash of light outside the window. Knowing that Logan was an easily spooked child, she mentioned nothing and decided to continue putting him to bed. Another flash. One more. Logan still hadn’t noticed, and Skylar began to count the intervals between the flash. One, two, three, flash. One, two, three, flash. Three second intervals. Was someone trying to get her attention? The closest neighbor was miles away. There shouldn’t have been anyone outside. “I need to go check on something real quick, and I don’t want to have to tuck your wiggle worm self in again, so stay in bed Logan.” She began to creep downstairs. When she reached the bottom of the stairs, she felt a breeze. The window was open. “I could have sworn I closed that earlier” she said to no one in particular. Walking forward to close it, she noticed a package on the table. Just a simple cardboard box, but there was something off about it. She just couldn’t place her finger on it. With a shriek she realized that someone had to have put it there while she was upstairs with Logan, and there was a chance they were still in the house. Bolting upstairs, she

went to grab her phone, and realized that this far into the country there was no service. Logans parents wouldn't be home from their date for a few hours yet, and other than the mysterious gift giver, there was no one around. When she went back into Logans room, he had fallen asleep. Closing the curtain on the window, and locking the door, she decided to stay in his bedroom until his parents returned. After half an hour of sitting restlessly in a chair, her curiosity got the better of her. She crept back downstairs, making sure to miss the steps that creaked. When she reached the bottom of the stairs, she sprinted to the table, and then at full speed, ran back into Logans room, locking the door behind her. She sat down on the floor, and stared at the box. While it seemed to be calling to her begging her to open it, a voice in her head told her that absolutely nothing good would come from it. But, like many teenagers, Skylar was not one to listen to a voice of reason. The box was not taped together, which seemed unusual in her mind. Opening the box, Skylar peered in with the most caution her curiosity would allow. Inside, was an old leather book. When she grabbed the book, an old, yellowing piece of paper fell out. The only thing written on the paper were the words, "Once upon a Time". Flipping through the book, it appeared to be an old but simple fairy tale collection. Realizing that someone must have played an awful prank on her, she threw the book down. Since she had nothing better to do, she grabbed a blanket, plopped back into her chair, and began to read. The story she chose depicted the adventures of Roxy, and Georgie, a lion and an elephant exploring the world.

The more she read, the more she realized that these were simple bedtime stories for young kids. After half an hour of reading, her eyes grew tired, and she began to drift off. She awoke to a loud noise. To her complete surprise, when she opened her eyes, she was riding atop an elephant. Completely bewildered, she sat up straight, and held on for her life. She suddenly heard a voice. "So your our new adventurer huh? About time we had someone new. That book hasn't been opened in years!" Where was that voice coming from? With sudden shock, she realized it was the elephant she was atop of. "Yes, hun, I'm the one talking. My names Georgie, and this is Roxy." Skylar began to protest. "This is a dream right? This has to be a dream. I did nothing to end up here."

"You opened the book didn't you? You read our story! Now you become part of it. If you wish to return from your adventure, just close your eyes, say once upon a time, and open them. Did you not read the paper?" Skylar was still in disbelief. Closing her eyes, she whispered, "Once upon a time." When she opened her eyes, she was back in her reading chair, laying underneath her blanket, like nothing had ever happened. Skylar never figured out who left the book at the house, or if it was even meant for her, but for the rest of her life, when she needed an escape, she sat down under a blanket, opened her book, and joined in on the adventures of Roxy and Georgie. One day, she never returned. No one ever figured out what became of Skylar Falin, but some say that if you ever see a lion and an elephant together in the wild, you can hear the faintest whisper of a young girls laughter.

# **“The Unexpected”**

**by Charley Kapper, 9th grade**

Sally was getting everything ready for their annual Christmas dinner. There were presents, food, and many more things, but the best part of the night was story time. Sally would always share her best memories with her great grandchildren. Although, this year was going to be different. The story was going to be something meaningful and she believed it was something more meaningful than life.

Later that night, they were all sitting around the fireplace. The children were excited to hear this new story, so Sally began.

It was February 17, 1946. It was a beautiful day for a walk on the beach in North Carolina. There weren't many people, which was surprising. The tide was quiet and shallow.

About 20 minutes into my walk, I noticed something was wrong. I was having trouble breathing and my whole body started to turn numb. I started stumbling around the shore, trying to hold myself up. I thought I had stepped on a small sea urchin but I knew I couldn't have or I would have noticed.

I started looking around for someone to help me. I tried to shout for help but I couldn't get a single word out. I stumbled to my knees, taking deep breaths. I looked up once more and that's when I saw him. He was running towards me, that's when I realized that whatever was happening was way more horrific than I thought.



He was about 10 feet in front of me when I stopped struggling and fell. He landed beside me and started talking to me, but I couldn't hear. I looked at the person who was trying to help me. He had these vibrant blue eyes that looked exactly like the ocean. I smiled up at him and tried to thank him but everything went black.

I was awake but couldn't see anything. I could hear people talking around me and when I tried to speak nothing happened.

One voice, that sounded like a female said, "She won't survive this coma if no one donates a working kidney."

"What blood type is she? There must be someone around that can help her," says a man coming from my left. I tried responding but I still couldn't say anything.

The woman states, "She's O-negative, sir."

"I'm O-negative. When's the soonest I can get into surgery?" the man says, urgently.

"I'll have to talk to the doctor that specializes in kidney removal," she states.

The man asks, "Are you able to ask the doctor now so I can know?"

"I can go find him now, sir," the woman says. I hear footsteps fading away which tells me the woman, who I assume is the nurse, is walking away to find the doctor.

I hear a chair move beside me and then the person grabs my hand. He doesn't say anything for a long time. Finally, he starts to say something but is then cut off by the door opening.

He suddenly lets go of my hand and asks, "Were you able to get in touch with the doctor?"

"Yes, sir, he said he would be able to get you in whenever works for you," the nurse says.

"Great, I would like to get ready now," He says.

"Umm, sir, you would have paperwork to do before that," the woman says, nervously.

"Any paperwork that needs to be done can be discussed later, can we start this now?" He states strictly.

She was obviously too nervous to say anything because I could hear footsteps receding from the room quickly.

Then the man grabs my hand and quietly says, "I know you probably can't hear me, but I promise... I'll get you out of there." Then he lets go and all I hear are his footsteps and the door closing. Then all of a sudden, silence.

I woke up again but this time was different. I could see everything around me. The nurse was in the room, checking my vitals.

"Excuse me?" I said hoarsely. The nurse looked at me and smiled.

"I'm glad you're up. I'll page the doctor to let him know," the nurse said, politely. I asked her what had happened.

She said, "Your kidney failed. You're lucky that man was around to bring you to the hospital." I remembered that man ever so slightly.

"Would you be able to tell me his name so I could thank him for bringing me here?" I asked.

"You'll have to thank him more than that," she said with a chuckle.

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

So he was the man who had been in here talking to that woman. I needed to see him soon.

“When will I be able to see him?” I asked.

“I’m not sure but I’ll ask the doctor and let you know,” the nurse said.

“Oh and his name is Robert Hanks,” she told me. Robert Hanks I said quietly. I need to see this man soon and thank him for everything.

I finished the story and all the grandchildren and great grandchildren were quiet for a second, then burst out talking. I laughed quietly.

“I know the question you all have is to whom this man was and where he is now,” I said with a smirk.

All my children had a smile on their faces and so did my husband. I motioned for him to come sit beside me and as he did, all the kids looked at me in shock.

“The person who saved my life that day, was my soulmate and I am grateful for meeting him that day or I wouldn’t have all of you in my life,” I said with tears.

“And there’s no better gift than that,” I said looking into his vibrant blue eyes that had saved me.

**Thank you** to our teachers who served as contest judges, Petefish, Skiles & Co. Bank who provided cash prizes for contest winners, and to the students who bravely shared their stories with us to enjoy.

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**Keep writing, Redbirds!**

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