

Whitsunday Voices Short Story Competition

Grades 7-8

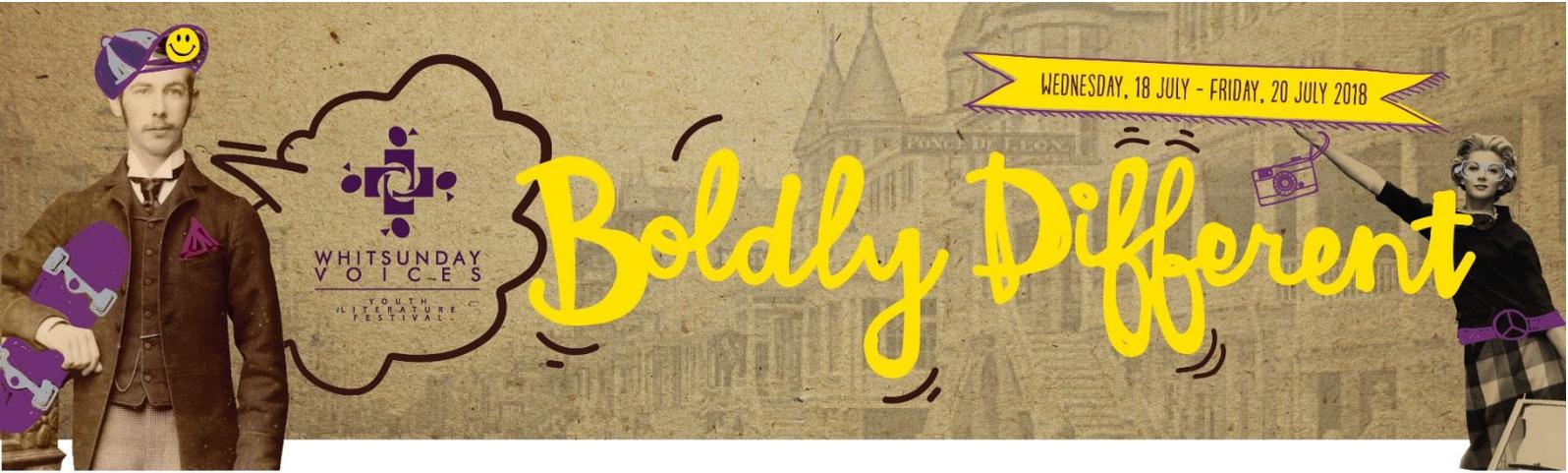
Highly Commended

Penny Zhang for

No Familiar Storms

Cracks of lightning shattered through the bleak sky, the sharp flashes framing a faded silhouette of a slim-figured girl. Her altantic-blue eyes traced the swirling storm clouds, observing with fascination as the lightning lashed the branches of young trees, sending them flying into the distance. Only the torrent of precipitation knew that Nadia was outside, watching the annihilation of her own backyard. Rain was usually company for her depressive times. It's easier to cry than laugh, especially when death approaches you like a long-lost friend. Ironically today, her emotions were filled with serenity, her genuine smile lighting up her face. Gentle breaths of warmth escaped between her chattering teeth, yet she refused to move. Nadia had a lot in her life to be grateful for, but only recently, had she realised her fortunes.

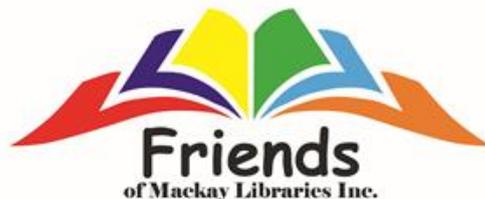
Her hand unconsciously slipped into her pocket, and she fished out a pamphlet. Nadia read the frail slip of paper so many times, the edges were tattered and frayed. A normal person would memorise the small paragraphs by now, but Nadia struggled to remember her own name. Prior to the storm, simply reading the first sentence would trigger the



cold hand that wrapped around her heart. Now, only the faintest light of confusion could be seen in her eyes. Nadia had no idea why she was so attached to this strange piece of cardboard, or how it related to her. A stubborn door shrieked as rust and metal scraped together. Despite the wiry mesh coverage, Nadia could clearly see the details of the people behind it. The old couple inside the house stepped out into the raging storm. Nadia had the peculiar feeling that she recognised the faces. That comforting emotion was quickly replaced with familiar discombobulation. Her beloved, but forgotten, parents silently embraced their daughter. The tear-stained faces worn by her parents matched the personality of the weather, fierce but desperate. Nadia let the pamphlet slip between her fingers. Somewhere, in her maze of a mind, she automatically knew that she was connected to these adults. She allowed them to lead her inside the house. The gentle splutter of an engine was barely heard over the roaring gusts of wind. A car left Nadia's house, heading towards the hospital.

A few days later, the cyclone finally blew over. Strangely, even though cars and trees were flipped and destroyed, a small piece of paper lying in the backyard of an ordinary house remained in its place, sodden with water, but not moved since the day it was dropped. The smaller font was blurred and incomprehensible.

However, the heading could be easily read- 'Alzheimer's Final Stage – how to accept the inevitable'.



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