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This document contains two texts. First one is the Round 1 Finished Work Entry on the theme of "Family". Second one was done on the day of the in-person final 10th June 2023, as a Freewrite/First Draft activity with the following prompt: "Write about the friendship that inspired your favourite song."

ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION
discovering voices

First Text: Round 1 Entry

Hoping to Dream

Mother always said, “Be good and nice things will happen.” But if that's true then I must've done something horrifically wrong. This Saturday, I and my mom went down to the docks to see my dad again, he’s a fisherman! The blue ocean waves gently crashed against the boats with golden sails. I remember how happy I was, walking along all the pretty boats, the ocean waves calm the sky clear without a cloud in sight, it was a beautiful day before they took me.

“Can we get some bannock?”

“No, Kirra.”

“Pleeeeeeeease?”

“Kirra, I already said no.”

“Pretty please?”

“I'll go with you” My dad chimes in before turning back to my mom “You take Adriel and start walking home, I'll take Kirra to get some bannock, we’ll be quick, I promise.”

“Yay! Come on!” I grab my father's hand before pulling him towards the bakery, I see him wave to my mom and brother before he turns to me and smiles “Alright Kirra, let's go get you some bannock.

I walk with my dad to the bakery, and eventually, we get there, “Daaad come on give it!” “Just wait a moment I've got to pay.”

I huff and reach up to the counter and grab the bannock before leaving the shop with my dad. We start heading back home, I see some tall men walking around. They're far away and dressed in weird clothes, they remind me of the men that came to my neighbour's house before they took Tau to school.

"When is Tau coming back?" I look at my dad while eating some bannock. My father's face pales for a second.

"I'm not sure, why do you ask?"

"Oh, it's just that those men are dressed up like the guys that took him to his new school!" I point at the men and my father's face pales he grabs my hand and starts walking the other what.

"Dad, what's going on? Why are you walking so fast? You're gonna make me drop my food!" "I'll explain later, we just have to get back home first."

Me and my dad run for a long time before reaching our house. When we do, the white men are talking to my mother, and as I get closer, I notice my brother is also there. One of the men is holding him by his arm, and my mom is crying. As I take another step trying to get closer, I feel a tug on my arm.

"Don't."

I look back at my father. He also seems upset, but I don't know why. I look over at my brother and call out to him confused, "Adriel!" My dad tries to silence me but it's too late, everyone looking at us now. One of them starts walking towards us, my father stands in front of me and I run to my mom.

"Mom! What's going on? Why are they here?"

"They want to take you two to the residential schools, but I won't let them."

“Why not? It's not like there are any other schools! I want to learn; I want to get an education like Dad!”

“I know.” My mom answers putting a hand through my hair before putting a pin in to push it back from my face. “But all the children who have gone, no one has heard anything about them since they left. We don't know what’s going on there honey so...”

One of the white men yells at my parents in a language I do not understand. One of them puts his hand on my shoulder and pulls me to where my brother is. I look at him confused, and he looks back at me worried.

That was the last time I saw my family. The last time I saw my brother. Before I knew it we'd arrived at a school, and the other girls I was with told me it was called a residential school.

I walk into the building, it's big, and I was separated from my brother early on. I walk with the other girls into a room. It's big there are some women there they're holding scissors, and I see one of them approach me. She grabs my arm and pulls me away from the others and starts cutting my hair. I yell at her trying to get her to stop but she slaps me, and another lady holds me still. I start crying as I see strands of my hair start falling. The pin my mom put in my hair falls to the floor, seemingly unnoticed by the women. I look down at it, it's a light pink colour. It's the one my mom always puts in my hair because she knows it's my favourite. She used to tell me that when I was a baby, I would grab it out of her hair and hold it in my hands and look at it.

I try to reach for it but the women start yelling at me in the same language the men used to yell at my parents. Eventually, they finish cutting my hair and give me a bag of clothes to change to, they point to the other room and before I head in with the other girls, I grab the pin and put it into the bag of clothes I was given.

Now it's night and I am in a room full of other children like me. They tell me about the horrors that go on here, like that tomorrow morning the ladies will take us into a shower and try to scrub our skin colour away. They tell me that we are not allowed to use our language

and will be punished harshly if we do. I wanna go home. I miss my family. Tonight, I look at my pin and hold it close to my heart as I hope to dream about my family.

Second Text: Free Write/First Draft 10th June 2023

“UNTITLED”

I look at a sign on a window as I run away from the town. It's a poster talking about discounted mattresses, I feel my heart ache as I think back to my own bed. I hear my footsteps quicken and I feel my feet squish the grass below, before quickly picking up Coyote, his orange fur rubbing against my dirty green jacket as I try not to drop anything. While running I begin doubting myself once again. I think back to my old life. i had it good, and yet i left and can't retrace my steps.

“Come on!” I tell myself as I feel my shaky breaths begin to calm as I run deeper into the forest I call home, different shades of green cloud my vision until I reach a small clearing in between the trees. “Milly!” I turn around to see Aster sitting on a tree, his feet losely dangling off the branch.

“Where’d you go?” Aster jumped down and landed with an umph in front of me nearly onto the flower bed we made. His face contorting into a kind of worry i don't see often.

“I got milk!” I exclaim joyously before handing it over and placing Coyote on the ground.

“Did you steal this?” Aster asks, his voice sounding tired and knowing, I respond with a frown. “How else are we meant to get food!” I answered exhaustedly. Aster sighs before looking the milk over as I run over to a bush and grab a bowl.

“Here! I got the milk for Coyote since I know he likes it a lot!”

Aster takes the lid off the milk and places a small portion into the dirty bowl.

“Oh come on! She’ll need more than that!” I try to grab the milk carton from his hands but he pulls away quickly.

“No! Coyote is a cat! It's not meant to drink that much milk, mainly only water!”

“That makes no sense! Whenever I watch-well watched cartoons, cats always only drink milk!”

“Thats on cartoons! My mom told me that cats get sick if they drink too much milk! And she was a vet so-”

I try to shut him up and grab the milk carton from his hands once again tripping on his shoes. We both go barrelling onto the floor, both of us now soaking in 1 percent milk.

“Hey!”

“Sorry!” I say quickly helping him get up to his feet, Aster goes to grab the carten but stops.

I watch the color drain from his face and walk closer to see what he's staring at. Looking down at the carten once again and locking my eyes with- myself? I pick up the milk and examine it, i begin to read it out loud, the first thing my eyes are drawn to are big red text that says

“MISSING!” I continue reading it, my voice getting shakier each word that escapes my lips. “If you have seen either of these kids, Milly Soot (Age 8) or Aster Smith (Age 9) please contact the following number +55 56….” My voice stops working, i cant speak i can't think, i look at the photos and it's a picture of me, from six months ago and a picture of Aster.

I lift my head and look at him, we look different, wilder even, our hair before blond and shiny is now dirty and matted, our skin marked with mud, and our eyes tired and old. I can tell he's in pain. Something in my mind starts dwelling and tells me he never learned to swim, but, can I do anything when I'm also drowning? We look at each other from one second we just stare at each other, not a word being spoken, not a breath being released from our lungs.

My friend, my best friend, for the past 8 months of our lives. They're looking for us, we have to make a decision, we know that, we've been knowing that, i know that eventually they'll find us. I look around the clearing, small amounts of dirty tubaware surround us, the flower bed we built is hard and dirty, I think back to the poster on the window selling mattresses, but it’s home. Me and Aster take a deep breath before looking at each other, the kind of look that means, ‘I got you’. We smile at each other coming to a decision, and we speak at the same time.

“We need to return.”

“We need to leave.”

Then, chaos erupts.