

## “The River”

Vanessa's SUV curves unsteadily around the road, until the road dissolves altogether and a dirt-track glares back at us. We're completely at a loss and none of us believe Vanessa when she reassures us she knows where we are going. I look out the window and down at the bracken that scrapes at the car. Bugger, I write, on its dusty sides. **Civilisation is gone, gorse, pine trees and rusty farmer's shacks have taken over and the day is only going to get hotter. Far below, I catch a glimpse of the river winding around the base of the hill at its own pace, willows bowing gracefully to its waters in awe of their gentle power, river stones bleached to the colour of bone** (1). Vanessa takes a left up an even rougher track. I start to think we are being led on a wild goose chase.

**“How's the Happy Meal, Geoff? Still happy?” I ask.**

**“Shuddup, retard,” mutters Geoff looking** (2). Harry is twitching away to the scratchy sounds of his IPOD which can be heard over the rumble of the engine and churning gravel. The car suddenly skids and then rolls to a stop. We jump out and I stretch, wondering once again how it's possible to feel cooped up in an SUV. **Nobody says anything. It's a long long way down to the river from the Wairoa Gorge Bridge.** (3)

“What is it about bridges that make you want to do something mental?” asks Harry to no one in particular.

“Perhaps some people just like a bit of a view,” answers Vanessa.

“Or they want to get to the other side,” grins Geoff. Everyone rolls their eyes. Still, we all know why we're here. The only question is who's gonna go first.

As I look over the edge of the bridge I feel like I'm already falling. The water beckons me to join it. I almost feel the vertigo pulling me off the bridge into the water. **There's alot of bickering as to who will go first. All the while I've been watching the water** (4). I'm going to do it, I can do it. I know it's as easy as just letting go and leaning slightly forward, but I can't bring myself to trust in gravities divine powers. Then it all happens in slow motion. I climb up onto the top of the railings look out towards the river and turn my brain off. **My descent off the bridge begins** (5).

**The parallels of time have been tampered with. For a moment I'm held in the air and then I'm falling slowly yet I can feel the strong embrace of g-forces dragging my body down. I break through the looking glass** (6). I've ceased to fall. The water is cool and forgiving. I look back up and see my friends waving; they are the gods of Olympus who have just witnessed the fall of Icarus

