



National Certificate of Educational Achievement
TAUMATA MĀTAURANGA Ā-MOTU KUA TAEA

Exemplar for Internal Achievement Standard

English Level 3

This exemplar supports assessment against:

Achievement Standard 91475B

Produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing that develops, sustains, and structures ideas

An annotated exemplar is an extract of student evidence, with a commentary, to explain key aspects of the standard. It assists teachers to make assessment judgements at the grade boundaries.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority

To support internal assessment

	Grade Boundary: Low Excellence
1.	<p>For Excellence, the student needs to produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains, and structures ideas and commands attention.</p> <p>This involves demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of audience through the insightful selection and integration of ideas, language features and structure to create a striking whole.</p> <p>This student has produced a fictional narrative about interpersonal relationships and perceived risk in an outdoor education context which commands attention. Sustained and generally effective ideas about danger and risk have been developed through the integration of dialogue, description and the character's reflection.</p> <p>Language features such as repetition (1), use of first person narrative (2), and syntax for effect (3) are selected to create a coherent, fluent text. Diction, imagery and descriptive detail evoke the setting and build the personality and mood of characters, particularly in the first two paragraphs. The piece becomes a striking whole by integrating foreshadowing (4) and details, revealing character and creating plot complication (5).</p> <p>For a more secure Excellence, the student could balance the plot driven text by developing the underlying ideas about the importance of interpersonal relationships in a more original and sophisticated way.</p>

“No Way Out”

① Black. Pitch Black. Almost as if all of the light of the world had ceased to exist but for the faint beam slicing through the hostile darkness. The light came from the small torch grasped in my hand and barely seemed to penetrate the inky darkness which threatened to swallow it.
 “Oi Magpie! Hold the torch still!” Phil’s voice, though forceful, was nearly lost in the darkness of the cave.

② “My name is Maggie! And if you hadn’t DROPPED yours, I wouldn’t have to!” I shot back. “And maybe if your ego weren’t so big there’d be more room in your head for a brain,” I muttered.

② A shiver ran down my spine. The freezing water from the underground stream had soaked through my shoes ages ago but my thick thermal top had managed to keep out most of the cold until now. Ever persistent, it was now beginning to crawl under my clothes and over my skin. I could just see Phil’s hunched over back squeezed down between the narrow gap of the limestone walls of the cave, as he fumbled around in the dim light looking for his missing torch.

② “Hurry up Phil! We’re getting left behind,” I snapped in frustration. Damn it. I would give anything to be back in the school van now. I let out a sigh as my thoughts drifted back to earlier that morning..

“Now don’t be fooled by this weather folks, the buildup of low pressure on the western side of these ranges means it rains for almost ninety percent of the year!” Derek, our caving instructor loved sharing facts about his beloved mountain ranges. “And remember,” he continued, “all the streams are connected one way or another through these hills, which makes them quite unpredictable. In fact...” He continued to babble on but I’d lost interest and turned to gaze out the window once again. The bright sun hovered just above the distant Tennyson Mountains making it hard to believe there was rain pouring down just on the other side of the ranges. I wished I was still in bed but my mother thought it would help me adjust to the new school I hated. Nobody was actually mean, but nobody talked to me either. Except Phil Cameron, my partner for Chem. He just never shut up and apart from being arrogant, he was also a complete idiot. I secretly named him “Phil the Fool” after an episode in Chemistry where he decided to add three times the suggested amount of Sulfuric Acid to the Sodium Hydroxide, which consequently over flowed and burnt his entire hand, covering it in raw red blisters.

All of a sudden the van gave a lurch as we pulled over a rut on the roads edge into a muddy little turn around area for cars, with an overgrown track leading into the bush.

④ “Right. Here we are folks, the Templar Cave system. Grab all your gear; jackets, woolly hats, torches, gummies and don’t forget your safety gear and get ready for some extreme caving?!” We didn’t have to walk for long before he announced cheerfully, “There it is ladies and gents. The Giant Drop. Once we’re in it’s onwards and outwards folks, no turning back. And you’ll just love The Squeeze....”

① Black. Pitch Black. Almost as if the light of the world had ceased to exist, but for the few faint beams of light slicing through the hostile darkness ahead of me. I could see the others further ahead, silhouetted by their torches.

④ “The Squeeze is just a bit further on folks, time to get down and dirty.” I could faintly hear Derek’s enthusiastic voice from the front of the group. Great, I thought. We’d been in the cave now for what seemed like forever after abseiling down through the darkness like we were being fed to some horrendous monster. And of course, when Derek had partnered us all up as a safety procedure, I ended up with Phil. Safety? Hah! Not with Phil the Fool!

The light from my torch lit the area in front of me, I could see Phil’s legs knee deep in water searching for footing in the darkness. All of a sudden my ankle lurched sideways.! I twisted my body and

groped for the side of the cave just managing to get a hand hold on the slippery wall, to stop myself from toppling into the freezing cold water. Was it my imagination or was the water getting deeper?

"Keep it together klutz! We're already behind thanks to you." Phil's voice cut through the darkness.

"You're not going any faster, so shut it." I fired back.

"If it weren't for you I'd be leading this pack of morons," Phil replied. "I'm the Cave Master!" As he swung his arms into the air in a grand gesture, his torch flew from his hand, hit the wall and rebounded through a narrow crack in the wall of the cave.

"Cave Disaster more like," I sneered. "Now who's holding us back? Hurry up and find it, you idiot!"

"....!"

I gave a start at Phil's voice. "What now!"

"My torch, it's ahh... well it's ahh... broken..." he replied, somewhat deflated. Some safety procedure this partnership was.

"Look just get outta that crack so we can find Derek. Maybe he'll have a spare? That is if he's enough of an idiot to lend it to you."

Phil emerged from the darkness of the crack. "Shut it wisie! Now get your move on."

I turned my torch towards where I'd last heard the faint voices of the rest of the group. The light danced across the limestone until it stopped short against solid rock. "What the..." I stammered in shock. God this can't be happening. As I drew closer I saw that the tunnel didn't end at all. The ceiling of the cave sloped steeply down to the water. It chilled me to the bone.

"Phil..." I said weakly.

"What's going on?" his voice now right behind me was filled with confusion.

"The Water... It's risen. We're trapped."

There was a long silence until Phil said hesitantly, "I think this might be The Squeeze. It's a sort of risk perception thing Derek was talking about in class the other day."

"As if you ever listen to anything in class!" I scoffed.

"Well, no not usually but this sounded a bit interesting.... All we have to do is swim underwater for about half a minute and then we're on the other side. There's just one problem...."

"Only one?" I asked sarcastically.

"I can't swim."

"Then why did you come on the trip if you knew you'd have to swim?" I shouted.

"Too embarrassed," muttered Phil. There was another really long silence.

"Phil - I'm a really good swimmer but you're going to have to trust me...."

"What! Trust a whiny little Emo girl like you? You must be joking. There must be another way out!"

"There is no way out . Are you absolutely sure Derek said it was thirty seconds?"

"Well ... pretty sure."

"Like 100 % sure, Phil? Not like 'I'm-pretty-sure- this-is- how-much-Sulfuric Acid-we-use' sure?"

"100 % sure. Maggie"

If we waded into The Squeeze as far as we could, I thought, and Phil held onto my shoulders, I could swim us under, if we both kicked like hell. And Phil didn't panic.

"Phil?"

No answer.

"Phil – it's now or never cos the water is rising really fast..."

"Let's go," he said quietly.

3

	Grade Boundary: High Merit
2.	<p>For Merit, the student needs to produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains and structures ideas, and is convincing.</p> <p>This involves demonstrating discerning understanding of purpose and audience through the discriminating selection and integration of ideas, language features, and structure.</p> <p>This student has produced a fluent, coherent and convincing short story that sustains a central idea about an intelligent but disengaged teenager, aware of conflicting appearances and reality in human interaction.</p> <p>Language features are integrated with effective structures to create a convincingly fluent, coherent story. There is a discriminating selection and use of narrative description (1) and a balance of an internal stream of consciousness with dialogue (2). The integration of language begins to command attention, e.g. descriptive details, humour, formal and colloquial diction, imagery (3).</p> <p>The selection and integration of a performance motif convincingly sustains the central idea (4). Altogether, this shows a discerning understanding of purpose and audience for this type of text.</p> <p>To reach Excellence, the student could insightfully integrate effective structures and language with ideas by exploring reasons behind the narrator's disengagement.</p>

“Performance”

Approaching the door I know I’m already late. *Funny, being late used to fill me with a sick, giddy feeling like standing on the edge of a cliff but now nothing but a slow, weary sense of déjà-vu.* The door creaks when it opens but Teacher doesn’t even look up.

“Still wearing those lead boots I see.”

② *You mean “hear.”*

“Don’t suppose you brought a late slip?”

“Yes Miss.”

“And might I ask why are you late to class? Again.”

“No reason Miss.”

④ *Two performers doing the same routine.*

I take my seat at the back of the class, suppress the heat of mild irritation and irrational embarrassment rising up in my face.

④ *This isn’t our first performance after all and it probably won’t be the last... Another period delegated to the monotony of education.*

① *The Slackers mess around as usual. More studious types, the Nerds or the Desperates write down notes off the board diligently. I stare into space looking into nothing in particular. In the corner of the classroom nobody expects you to participate. It’s easier to listen this way.*

② *Teacher’s words float through the air (1) - A cumulonimbus of knowledge raining wisdom.*

But sometimes her voice doesn’t even reach my distant chair; it wavers, outnoised and rendered meaningless by the hum of social bees.

③ *Look on the bright side! At least they’re not talking to you*

True. Mindless banter from idiots is never appealing.

Hmmm... Your negative emotions regarding this particular social clique appear to be grounded in your own neurotic need to be accepted coupled with a self-knowledged social ineptitude and features of reactive depression.

② *Thank you Freud!*

Daydreaming gets me through the day, my own little sanctuary from school and home, somewhere quiet....

A slacker sniggers at one of Teacher’s comments. My eyes flicker open for a moment then a slow fuzziness, a pleasant drowsiness, honeylike, pours into me, turning animated chatter and Teacher’s authoritative tone into a low hum.... I jolt into back consciousness with a chair squealing behind me as a jock ducks for cover as his friends shower him with paper darts. I roll my eyes to the ceiling then notice for the first time that not only is it splattered with paper spitballs but it’s perforated with tiny little holes

③ *maybe 30 across 30 down 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, ... wait... 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11... Man, maybe it’s more than 30which would make it ummm... Well, a lot anyway... Try again 1,2,3...*

The “Hrrumph!” from the whiteboard is an abrupt reminder that sleeping in class, while not strictly prohibited is frowned upon by the faculty of the school.

“Mr Tamihana, would you care to explain why you are wasting your time and mine? Well??

Do you find this class boring?”

Maybe. “No Miss.”

I know what comes next. A few more generic lines and the teacher will back off and leave me to my own devices.

“Truth be told, you’re not planning on finishing this assignment, are you.”

“No Miss. No wait - I mean – What was that, Miss?” *Dammit, teachers never usually ask questions like that!*

Teacher’s glare could melt plastic. “After school, Mr Tamihana. No excuses.”

An empty classroom. Well, except for Teacher and me.

“Mr Tamihana. You’ve never been the most diligent student, but any one with eyes can see that something’s up.”

At least she didn’t say “What’s wrong,” a statement I profoundly dislike. Mainly because it’s almost never used sincerely.

“What’s wrong?”

④ A grimace almost crosses my face. **Time to play dumb.**

“Miss?”

She replies with one eyebrow raised, not fooled, “Don’t play dumb.”

Try another approach.

“Miss, I’m fine.” *Small grin and a slight crinkle to the eyes. Learning to smile authentically: probably the best spent thirty minutes of my life.*

④ A shadow, maybe doubt, crosses Teacher’s face. “You’re sure?”

“Absolutely.” **Hold the smile...**

Teacher nods whether in acceptance or resignation, I don’t really care. Home free at last. Whatever that means.

	Grade Boundary: Low Merit
3.	<p>For Merit, the student needs to produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains and structures ideas, and is convincing.</p> <p>This involves demonstrating discerning understanding of purpose and audience through the discriminating selection and integration of ideas, language features, and structure.</p> <p>This student has produced a fluent and coherent piece of column writing about the changing nature of the classic Kiwi bach that is sufficiently convincing. The ideas are sustained and structurally integrated by describing and contrasting past and present experiences of the Kiwi holidaymakers (1), physical changes (2) and linking these to freedom and memory (3).</p> <p>This becomes a convincing fluent and coherent text by the discriminating selection and integration of language features such as contrast (1), balancing personal anecdotes with more generalised observation (4), transitions and syntax. Ideas of the bach are linked through language selection (e.g. humour, descriptive detail, specific cultural reference, listing, pronouns and parallel construction).</p> <p>For a more secure Merit, the student could make a more discriminating integration of ideas and language features by exploring in greater depth what it means to <i>'know our past to build our future'</i> (5).</p>

The Kiwi bach: a thing of the past?

③ “Bach.” Even the word is iconically Kiwi. Mum grew up spending summers in a bach that was little more than a shed, bathing in the river down the back of the section and getting lost in the surf three times a day. Now a trip to the beach seems to be just an opportunity to parade around in too-short shorts, jandals designed by Trelisse Cooper, and cruise around the surf shops drinking iced coffee checking out cute guys. ① Of course, if that begins to bore you then there’s always the wide screen and bean bags to retreat to, complete with SKY HD and microwave popcorn of course. So much for the old days of Monopoly and mussel fritters. The old days when the décor consisted of decrepit, mismatched furniture, just pausing before its final resting place at the tip, and knick knacks made by mum in technicraft classes at ③ intermediate.

These days our coastlines are eclipsed by blocks of towering concrete inset with black cedar features, bi-folding glass doors to create that indoor-outdoor flow, glass balastrades, landscaped terraces of yuccas and carex grasses, double garage, four bedrooms, each with their queen bed and two complete with en-suites. ② But you know, every time we bowl down a nice little bach we’re destroying part of our culture, a culture which can be seen in the simplicity of the Kiwi bach, the picnic umbrella, boiled eggs and burnt sossies with the last of the Wattie’s tomato sauce squeezed over them. ②

And when we lose our baches, we’re also going to lose our stories. There’s that taped up window that Steve put a cricket ball through, the wall in the laundry with everyone’s height measured on it. There’s that wobbly brick where Kathie stubbed her toe when she four, that wonky latch on the downstairs door where Jen broke in after she hitch hiked all the way from Hamilton. There’s the pile of jigsaw puzzles, each with at least three pieces missing after ③ Josh played ‘pickup 2000’ with them all. There are stories in our baches, stories that often ④ don’t have relevance at home in the city. The more we lose our kiwi bach, the more we lose our memories —and the more memories we lose, the more we lose ourselves. We sacrifice memories of ourselves and our families for home theatre systems and Venetian Shutters. For ③ ④ internal access garaging and limited collection prints on the walls. What’s the point? Hasn’t it always been drummed into us by grandparents and nostalgic teachers that we have to know ⑤ our past to build our future? And yet here we are in the twenty first century tearing down our pasts and building boring futures!

And what about little kids today? What about their memories? I don’t know about you but for me, going away to the beach means freedom. But uptight modern baches constrict that, just like uptight modern houses do. So where’s the holiday? There’s not a lot of fun in eating ice blocks over the sink while everyone else plays ‘Go Fish’ because Mum doesn’t want pink fingerprints on the couches. This is why we need old, falling down baches. I mean sure, Mum has a point, but wouldn’t it be easier for everyone if we bunged in old brown polyester couch, already dotted with tomato sauce and Fanta and could just sit back and relax? I don’t know many people who consider scrubbing down white furniture a holiday. ③ It’s a shame because going to the bach used to be a Kiwi kid golden memory. Too bad it’s going to disappear.

Just like our baches.

	Grade Boundary: High Achieved
4.	<p>For Achieved, the student needs to produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains, and structures ideas.</p> <p>This involves demonstrating understanding of purpose and audience. This is demonstrated through the development of linked ideas and the use of accurate structures and language features to create consistent meaning and effect for sustained interest.</p> <p>This student has produced a fluent and coherent short story about unexpectedly taking part in a community parade. The central idea about the narrator overcoming her self-consciousness and bonding with her father has been sufficiently sustained and structured through a discerning use of character development (1) (2) (3) (4).</p> <p>Appropriate language features are selected to create consistency in meaning and effect. This sustains interest with some discrimination in places by the use of a humorous personal voice, descriptive detail, diction, irony (5). Effective structures create a coherent text through transitions, the chicken motif (6), and rising tension reaching comically ironic resolution (7).</p> <p>To reach Merit, the student could develop the father-daughter relationship by integrating it with details of the parade, so that it becomes generally convincing.</p>

“Chicken?”

① “You ready for the parade then?” I look up and gasp in shock. Dad’s wearing a chicken outfit and looks like some American basketball team mascot. Bright red and orange feathers and worst of all, under his arm, a huge chicken head. “You ready?” he repeats as he somehow manages to squeeze his oversized get-up into the car. I nod, speechless. I’m still getting over the fact that there is a large grumpy chicken in the driver’s seat. Only an idiot with a death wish would ask Dad what he thought he was up to.

② ⑤ ⑥
⑤ “Dad! What are you dressed up like that for?”

② “Not my idea. Blame Jess,” he says grimly. “It’s a protest against battery chickens. For Blossom Parade.”

① “Oh... well.... that explains it”. One word slowly thrums in my head.

① **Shame...Shame...Shame.**

⑥ Blossom Parade is the one day in the year that Templeton is actually full of people. It’s during these parades that our town comes alive. Garlands of flowers in bloom are hung along the rooftops. Every business seems to be open yet everyone’s are out on the streets generally having a great time catching up with everyone and having a bit of a laugh. It’s really noisy and colourful with people everywhere.

Dad pulls our battered blue Suzuki into a carpark and goes off to meet up Jess and the others waiting on the corner. I can already see the floats assembled in the park so I head over to have a closer look. They’re beautiful and it seems that everyone in town has put one in. When I finally get back from my tiki tour around the floats, I see that Dad’s still busy talking to the others. For some reason Jess looks really worried, then she looks over at me.

② ⑤ “There you are! Hurry up and get this on!” snaps Dad as he throws me a chicken costume! It turns out one of the chickens has pulled out at the last minute. “No way Dad! Don’t make me do this!” I squawk in horror but Dad just gives me one of his looks.

⑥ On the trailer stands a large cage and inside the cage are our battery hens, Raelene, Tracey and Hana pressed against the bars. We, the ‘free range’ chickens, strut in bright costumes beside the float, our red and orange feathers glowing in the sunlight. Suddenly I realize no one knows who I am and I begin to enjoy myself. Still it’s hard to focus with the screaming crowd that surrounds us and children that dart out to touch the floats.

③ We are already halfway through the town when suddenly a leg stretches out before me and before I know it I’m flat on my face. Looking up I see a guy my age sniggering down at me, surrounded by his creepy mates. As I stagger up, he sneers “Let’s see ya do the Chicken Dance” and then suddenly he shoves me backwards. All of a sudden I see the bully being knocked off his feet by ... Super Chicken Guy! The crowd goes crazy with excitement!

④ Of course it only takes seconds for the cops to arrive. They handcuff Dad and then lift the chicken head off. Dad stands there in the middle of Templeton with hundreds watching him. He doesn’t care. Nobody picks on his baby! I go to stand beside him then with a grin slowly spreading across my face, I take off my mask too.

⑥ ⑦ Once the police finally release us the sun has done its job and is nicely tucked into bed below the horizon. The day has taken its toll but what I have gained from it is invaluable. Dad turns to me. “Ya feel like KFC?” he asks.

	Grade Boundary: Low Achieved
5.	<p>For Achieved, the student needs to produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains, and structures ideas.</p> <p>This involves demonstrating understanding of purpose and audience. This is demonstrated through the development of linked ideas and the use of accurate structures and language features to create consistent meaning and effect for sustained interest.</p> <p>This student has produced a fluent and coherent short story about a strained mother/daughter relationship. A central idea is sufficiently developed, sustained and structured about the sense of tension between a mother and daughter (1) and its resolution (2).</p> <p>Language features and structures are selected and used to create consistency in meaning and effect and to generally sustain interest. A coherent text is created through the use of a language features such as personal voice, descriptive detail, diction and syntax (3) (4). The plot structure is consistent with this type of text.</p> <p>For a more secure Achieved, the student could sustain ideas further by describing the tension in the shop and making links to the reasons behind the mother's sudden change in attitude. More consistent selection of language in places (5) could improve the fluency of the piece.</p>

"The Perfect Dress"

As the car came to a stop outside the mall, I slumped back in my seat. Mum was silent. We hardly ever went shopping together. She always said that she had too much housework or was too tired but really it was because every time we went shopping together we argued. Big Time, even over the littlest of things. But for once it could not be avoided by either of us. She had the money and I needed it. I hopped out of the car into the freezing air. She looked at me with a cold stare. I hastily closed the door, slunk to the shop entrance and waited for the strong lemony scent of her perfume to close in on me. "This is it," we said to one another as we awkwardly linked arms and plastered fake smiles onto our faces.

As we stepped in to the store, the noise was incredible. Excited teenage girls were running everywhere in search of the perfect dress to the racks where ball dresses hung like a giant swaying rainbow.

"Where to begin?" I said in a bright fake voice.

"How about over there?" said Mum pointing to the row of sale items in a dark corner of the shop that no one but Mum would be drawn to.

As I watched from a distance, she began swinging the coat hangers from one end in lightning speed, and yet in disturbing orderly fashion. She glanced at me and said loudly "You don't want to be wearing such revealing dresses as these do you, Neelaja?" Two girls giggled. My head sunk to the floor. She swung the last dress across the rack and went to sit down on the chair as if she had done what she came here to do and was now ready to leave. That's when I lost it!

"Mum! I know this is hard for you and believe me I'd much rather be here by myself but now that we are can you please please PLEASE just get up and at least pretend you want to be here!" I heard my voice crack and people around us began to stop and stare. There was dead silence. Mum's brown eyes pierced through me. There was a long pause.

"Fine," she said.

We slowly walked down a row of dresses together and I prayed that we would agree on something. First dress too revealing, second dress too boring, third dress ... Silence. We both glanced at each other and then back at the dress. It was the most perfect looking dress I had ever seen, long and flowing like a beautiful river. Mum looked at me, her eyes more squinty than ever, and then her plump lips began to curve. "This is the one" she said. "Neelaja, this is the one you must try on." It was perfect on.

We walked over to the counter and asked how much it cost. I closed my eyes as the salesgirl scanned it. "\$150," she said to us in a low voice. The same desperation I had felt earlier now consumed me. I held my breath. You could have heard a pin drop then I heard Mum say, "Alright. We will take it, my dear." I stared as she took out her purse.

I happily swung the shopbag as we left the shop. "Now that wasn't too bad!" I said as I attempted to break the silence. Mum's mouth tightened then she began to laugh.

	Grade Boundary: High Not Achieved
6.	<p>For Achieved, the student needs to produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains, and structures ideas.</p> <p>This involves demonstrating understanding of purpose and audience. This is demonstrated through the development of linked ideas and the use of accurate structures and language features to create consistent meaning and effect for sustained interest.</p> <p>This student has produced a short story about a man suffering from grief and regret as a consequence of a fatal drink-driving car accident. A central idea is developed, structured, and sustained by the use of details and imagery to describe a man traumatised by a past event (1), his past (2), and revealing his thoughts and emotions (3).</p> <p>Effective structures, appropriate to short story conventions, begin to create a coherent text. The student uses an introduction to create interest, transitions to signal the shift from memory to flashback and abruptly back to the present (4), repetition of some details to create a sense of unity and time passing (5), and an ending twist for impact.</p> <p>To reach Achieved, the student could develop fluency by using language features to create consistency in meaning and effect, and to sustain interest (6).</p>

“Regret”

1 The man bolted up in his sleep with a scream. He was gasping for air and yet his lungs did not seem to get satisfied with the air. Fear was evident in his brown coloured eyes. He

6 looked around his surroundings. His body shuddered from the cold. It was 4:30 and he felt nausea beckoning him back to bed. But his body could not obey. Horrible images of the previous dream flashed through his mind like a motion picture, distant but vivid and genuine.

1 As he allowed himself to be swallowed by his memories, he found himself standing inside a house full of party goers, on his left was a beautiful girl. It hit him like a stone. Instantly he

4 knew he was at Andy’s place fifteen years ago.

He could smell alcohol and sweat unified in the humid atmosphere. The party was like a

6 giant box with a hallowed centre. Everyone in the centre appeared to be controlled by a giant puppeteer. Invisible strings seemed to be attached to their arms and legs. He took a sip of wine. The scent of alcohol rising from his throat elated his nose. Standing beside him was Sarah. She was the most beautiful girl he had ever met with azure eyes and golden hair. He

6 glanced at his watch and like a mother hen, it annoyingly reminded him of midnight. It was time to go. He put down his wine. Both of them said goodbye to their friends rather gloomily.

6 The hot and humid air of May greeted his face. The relaxing sensation made him want to drift in the darkness. He suddenly felt a feeling of queasiness.

As he and Sarah approached the car park, he noticed that they were not alone. He could hear voices to his right and noticed two figures walking rather insanelly. They were drunk. Every step seemed to be controlled by the liquid they greedily took. He sensed Sarah’s uneasiness. It was time for them to leave. As they drove away, Sarah asked how much he had drunk. The man said “only a few” but he was lying. He could still drive. Their house was just a few miles away, the man thought.

The man’s vision became blurry. As he was about to accelerate, he noticed two shimmering lights approaching. They looked like the eyes of a monster glaring at him menacingly. Then it hit him. Both cars were heading towards each other at fleeting speed. He quickly turned the

2 wheels and hit the brake. But it was no use. Their vehicle skidded into the road like a weightless toy car. Everything seemed to slow down. The car turned over like a lumbering

6 beast. He heard a muffled scream from his right. He looked to his left but he could not see Sarah. There was only blood. Suddenly two beaming headlights greeted them like death.

5 There was no time for them to react. The force of the approaching car hit them head on like

6 a destructive cannon pulverising a battleship. There was a loud crash and everything went black. The man snapped back to reality, cold sweat running down his back. A single tear drop escaped his murky eyes. The man could not remember what had happened next. He could smell burning gas but he could not open his eyes. He felt something soft and wet on his hands. It was Sarah’s hands wet with blood.

5

The man stood up. He figured he could not sleep anymore. He looked through his windows and saw the sky. It was 5:30 and the sky was still dark. The only light was a gold glistening glow on the horizon. It reminded him of Sarah. How he wished to see her again. How he

- 5 3 wished to look into her blue eyes that were like a stunning ocean on a jubilant day. How he wished to hold her delicate hands again.

5 He remembered back then how he wanted to turn back the hands of time to save Sarah from her death. He looked back to his room. It was cold and dark. Yet a single object had caught his mind. It was a cerulean frame bordered with sea shells. Inside was a picture of a woman. It was Sarah. Unchanged and pure, her face remained lovely through time. Her blue eyes still rivalled the colour of the ocean. She was smiling. Sarah was smiling at him. The man looked onto his watch and noticed it was the second day of May. The man smiled back. "Happy 15th anniversary Sarah".