

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize – Teen Short Story

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### Love Catherine

The play equipment surrounding her had been a skeletal sphere: four ladders curving around and joining at the top; three bars running horizontally around her like arms coming in to hold her. She climbed onto the platform at the base and then onto the third rung of the ladder facing him. Her white dress floated as she stepped up. Her platform shoes were unstable on the thin metal rungs, but she balanced. She poked her head through the rungs, rested her arm on it and waved. He smiled.

She had brought him here with her camera so that he could take pictures of her. She had no recent ones, she said. None of just her, no nice ones. So he said he would take some for her, on the condition that she let him see them when they were printed. What for? She asked. So he could admire his photographic skills, he replied.

Click.

She brought him back to the play equipment to show him the prints. He had gone with her to pick them up, but she wouldn't open them until they were back there. They sat on the bench in front of the sphere, and she flipped open the floral album that the Processing centre had put them into. She leaned into him so he could get a better view.

She was frozen mid-wave. She was smiling. There was no colour, no sound, no rust on the metal bars but just her, sunlight whitening out unnecessary details, humidity misting out the apartment block behind her. She emerged from the mist, somehow, in her white dress and platform shoes. It must have been the dark hair, he thought, or maybe it was just that it was her, with a smile like that she didn't know how to be misted out. She emerged from the humidity, waving at him. At him. She was off-centre and slightly out of focus but he didn't mind. It enabled him to imagine that smile was for him. I'm fuzzy, she told him, look at that. You focused on the bench in front of me. He looked at her looking at the photo, her fringe growing over her eyes, her small, flat nose, her lips rubbing together for moisture. I meant to do that, he said.

She slipped the photo out of the album and said thank you. Turing it over in her lap, she took a pen out of her bag and started scribbling love messages to her boyfriend in New Zealand. I miss you, she wrote. (He watched her). I think about you always. Don't forget about me. Darling, I love you forever.

Love Catherine.