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**Special prize in the 2007 Imaginary Journeys story
competition for under 12s**

My Crazy Life

By Sadiya Quazi. Age: 8

Chapter 1

Running away

My life is so boring. All I do is clean and clean. Then after I've cleaned, I just work and work. I'm a servant in a castle called China Palace. OH! I forget to introduce myself. My name is Haley and I wear a long white dress. I am supposed to wear uniform but master lets me off. Master does sound kind doesn't he? Well... he's not. The only reason he's letting me off, is because mistress persuaded him to. For example, the other day, when I was cleaning and dusting, I accidentally dropped a china plate. He went absolutely crazy!

He threatened to throw me out on the streets and make sure I would never get a job in the local town. He never even likes the plate! In fact, he hated it!

Now, like many other stories, there will be something magical that will take me away and I'll live happily ever after. I wish that it would happen, I wish that I could go home, I wish that I could be with my friends and most of all, I wish I was happy. But I know that

it will never come true, I know that I have to do it myself. So...I am going to run away. Well it's not exactly "running away". I am going to try to sneak away on a little boat on the river next to the palace. I'm all packed and ready to go. I am taking a fishing rod with me so I can catch some fish. *Thump, thump, thump*. Footsteps! I stuffed every thing into the wardrobe in my little closet like room.

"Haley," master called, voice booming. "What are you doing? I thought I heard my fishing rod against the heater."

"Nothing sir," I said trembling. He had entered my room now.

"You better not be lying, or I'll make sure that you do not get your supper for the next month!" With that, he stormed out of the room.

I had made my mind up, I was going to run away and never come back, never ever.

Chapter 2

Wish I never left

I was calmly floating across the swaying water waiting for a fish to catch my bait, when suddenly there was a big gust of wind that rushed past me. My long fringe covered my eyes. Once I cleared the hair from my eyes, I found that I had left the main river and was floating into a cave. It was dark and spooky, and to be honest, I was getting really creeped out. I was getting more scared by the minute; it was as if the cave walls were closing in on me. I heard a slow splashing noise gradually getting faster and louder. Something had definitely caught my attention and it was in the water. Closer and closer, something was coming. I tried to steer the boat round but the current was too strong. It was as if the boat

had a mind of its own! Unexpectedly something emerged from the murky water. The sight was incredible! There were three of them. They were patterned fish with flat tiger leg like fins.

The creatures swam round the boat and then.... just disappeared. I looked behind me. Nothing. I turned back round. Still nothing. I kept hearing ghostly moans. Out of nowhere a mysterious voice whispered: "Turn back now..." then, "Go away... No one enters this cave... this is our river." Then a scream "GET OUT!" I tried to turn the boat round, but it would not budge. Then I heard a... CRUNCH!

I looked back. Part of the boat had been bitten off! I heard more ghostly moans. I reached out for my fishing rod, although it was not a good weapon, it is all I had. I couldn't reach it... Something was holding me back. I looked back and saw that one of the monsters like tentacles was gripping round my ankle. It gripped tighter. I tried to unwrap it but I couldn't do it! Then it tugged, it was going to pull me in! I splashed into the water, the fishy creature tried to drag me down but I held on to the boat with all my life, but it was no use.

I was powerless; the thing kept dragging me down in to the deep dirty water.

Every thing went black.

Chapter 3

Prison and rescue

I was kept under as a prisoner by these weird fish monsters for three days. They kept me in a room that had air to breath. I was growing thinner and thinner each day. Once I saw someone wave

at me from under the water. But that couldn't be I was in a cave in the middle of nowhere.

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The waving hand was real! I saw it again today. It was a girl's hand and she was calling out to me.

"I am going to rescue you once the creatures are asleep." I was so excited; I couldn't wait to get out of here. But I wasn't sure if the girl was a human or a mermaid. Night time came at last, although I didn't know because I was deep inside the underwater cave. I was very uncomfortable; I was chained up against the wall. Finally I saw a small face with auburn hair appear in a crack in the little cave room. It was her! As she came closer she looked like my old friend Rachel.

We had grown up together in the forest before I was taken away. We lived with a bear named Sheila who had given birth to three cubs. She came closer to untie me. But I was too tired and hungry, I drifted into unconsciousness.

Chapter 4

Change me.

"Haley," I heard "Haley come on stop dreaming. I'll show you around."

I jerked awake. "How do you know my name?"

"I'm surprised you don't remember. It's me, Rachel." I gasped at the information.

"It is you! Oh I've missed you! After I was found by the king of china palace, I was heart broken!" I hugged my friend. It was a

time of celebration and friendship. We had a great party that night. The food was delicious. I hadn't eaten so well in all my life.

Later, Rachel told me how she had been rescued by mermaids from the creatures that I'd met. My heart was still pounding from the party and the adventures. I was just exploring my new bedroom, when Rachel said, "Haley I have some frightening news to tell you."

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For the only time in my life, Rachel was frightening me. "Your joking around with me again aren't you?" I said nervously

"No, I'm not. Well do you want to hear it?" She whispered seriously.

"I'm ready."

"OK. If you are to live with me in the ocean, with out that breathing mask, I'll have to turn you into a mermaid."

I said nothing. I was speechless, scared and exited all at the same time.

"Well, shall we?" she asked. I dared myself to say something. "OK, I'm ready. I'm ready for it."

"Come with me." Rachel said firmly. She led me to a type of dungeon. There were cauldrons hanging which were being heated over fires. This was very strange as we were under water! She went over to cauldron which had an orange coloured liquid bubbling inside. Next to it there was a table with a lions head carved into its surface. The table was a golden colour and on it there were bat's wings, some kind of blue jelly and when I touched it, it wobbled like mad.

“Don’t touch,” Rachel said sternly. Also on the table there was a toy car. Rachel snatched everything from the table and dumped it into cauldron. The mixture dissolved the items very quickly. Once this was done, she got an empty jar and a ladle. She scooped some of the mixture with the ladle and poured it into the jar. Then she said “Drink it!” She threw her arms in the air... Then silence. I stood there with my mouth open.

“Ok,” I said, taking the drink, “Here goes,” GLUG! GLUG! GLUG! My lips trembled, I couldn’t part my lips. I held my hips; they didn’t feel the same way as they normally did. They were scaly and a lot different. I looked and stared. I was a mermaid. I couldn’t believe it!

“It is real trust me.” Rachel said to me. I screamed. I had a mermaid’s tail! I tried it out. “You’re becoming an expert at it already.” Rachel cried. I swam up to her and gave her a great hug. “I’m a mermaid!” I screamed at her with glee. “Keep it down will you! Now that you’re a mermaid, I need to go over some rules. You’re not just a mermaid but you can transform into a lot of other things as well. If you go onto dry land, your tail will turn back into feet. You can be any animal. Just concentrate on trying to be one. Is that OK?”

“Sure!”

So off we went, back to the underwater castle.

Chapter 5

Childhood Friends

The next day, Rachel said she would take me to the wide open spaces of the sea. I was really looking forward to it. I wanted to jump out of the sea like a dolphin and flap my tail like a whale.

“Be careful of whales and sharks though,” she said sternly. “I’ll lead the way.”

Soon we arrived. The water was a lot deeper here, I liked swimming down to the very bottom and shooting upwards out of the water doing a great big summersault. I felt free and independent. I could do as I pleased! Such a wonderful time I had that day.

But I had forgotten a very serious thing. I didn’t check for whales for sharks.

“Oh no, I forgot to check for the sharks or whales!” I cried

“Don’t worry, this place is safe anyway.”

“Oh good” I was relieved. I thought about those monsters again, it would be awful to get caught by them again. “Come on; let’s go to somewhere more dangerous. Your swimming has got a lot better!”

So I followed her for five minutes, swimming through the open water.

“We’re here!” I almost bumped into her. I popped my head out of the water. There was land nearby. Suddenly a huge paw grabbed me from behind and dragged me out on to land. The thing turned me around, it was a bear! I was going to be eaten! It gave a great big roar; I could smell something very familiar. I got a flashback of my own childhood, thoughts of Sheila the strange, but kind bear that looked after us. I remembered the three cubs she had and what we named them; Boog, Ronnie and Belinda. “Boog!” I shouted “It’s you!” Instead of eating me the great bear gave me a bear hug instead. Three more bears appeared from the bushes. Rachel popped her head from the water. “Is that... Boog?” Rachel asked nervously.

“It’s them!” I exclaimed “they’re back!” The other bears came closer. They roared with happiness. We were one big family again!

Chapter 6

Family Reunite

Rachel and I climbed onto the bears backs and they carried us from the beach into the forest. Rachel unexpectedly jumped off the bears back. “Haley get down, I have an idea!” Think you are a bear! Then we can talk to our old friends.

I did what she said, and we both turned into bears. The others looked at us in astonishment as we did.

“I know a way we can bless our family and keep us from evil for ever!” Sheila said in the bear language.

She picked up a stick from the ground and turned to Boog. She touched it to his shoulder and said;

“Please keep this family together.

Keep us united

Caring for each other

Keep us united.”

She did this to everyone but said an extra special bit for me and Rachel;

“Make these stay bears for ever, as part of this family or this family will be broken again.”

Our family was reunited once again.

These days are just like the old. I’ll never go back to the China Palace. I shall always stay here forever.

Together with my family.

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Winning Entries

Winners of the Imaginary Journeys 2007 Story Competition for children under 12.

WISHES THREE

Many thanks to the many children who wrote three wishes stories for this competition – we received well over a hundred entries this year. We enjoyed reading them a lot and there were many excellent tales. If your name doesn't appear on the list of prize winners and runners up below, you may well be one of the people who almost made it to the final list – people whose

stories, for example, contained some good writing or some original ideas, but who didn't quite make the wishes plot work for them. Next year's competition, which will be announced quite soon, is around the idea of creating imaginary/fantasy worlds. It may suit you better, so do give it a try again. You never know your luck.

You'll soon be able to read this year's winning stories and some of the runners up in a download available on this page. By the way, if you made the final list, you will receive a runner-up prize of a book and a certificate – and you can tell everyone that you were probably very close to winning.

This years winners are:

First prize: (£30 and 2 CDs) – Elspeth Dale from Hassocks, West Sussex for her story 'Who said anything about wishes?'

Second prize (£15 and 2 CDs) - Niall Dulicia, Lydden, nr Dover, Kent for his story 'The Vial'

Third prize (£10 and 2 CDs - Katie Mulhern, Polegate Primary School, East Sussex for her story 'Three Wishes'

Special prize (£10 and 1 CD – Sadiya Quazi, Sheredes Primary School, Hoddesdon, Herts for her story 'My Crazy Life'

Runner up prizes (CDs & books)

CD & book

Eliane Belben – Crofton Junior School, Orpington, Kent

Loulou Elliott – Pevensey, East Sussex

Antoinette Merryfield – Gosport, Hampshire

Ryan Mason – Polegate, East Sussex

Fiona Fraser – St Paul's Primary School, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells

Books

Becky Kearns - Polegate Primary School, Polegate, East Sussex

Jack Hatton – St Mary's CE School, East Grinstead, West Sussex

Stephanie Becker – St Mary's Primary School, East Grinstead, West Sussex

Emily Rose Faulkner, Polegate, East Sussex

Samuel Watkins, Madginford Park Junior School, Maidstone, Kent

Joanna Morgan, Crofton Junior School, Orpington, Kent

Andrew Tickell – St Peters Primary School, Stakes Hill Road, Waterlooville, Hants
Catriona Rainey, Madginford Park Junior School, Maidstone, Kent

(Books kindly provided by Macmillan Children's Publishing and poet Brian Moses. Many thanks.)

In addition to these, **20 more stories have been awarded certificates of commendation.**
We will post an additional list of these entries on the site shortly.

We would like to thank the many teachers who encouraged children to enter this competition and have helped to make it such a success. Special mention should be made of Polegate Primary in East Sussex, a school that entered very many interesting and creative stories of a high standard.