

Heart of Stone

By: Raya Kariath, grade 8

Kathleen's Perspective:

Fire spews out of houses surrounding us. I run out of the collapsing house just missing the banister. Then a feeble voice screeches, "KATHLEEN!" My sister. My thoughts begin to smush. Do I go in and risk my life to save my sister, or run away and save myself? The answer sits in front of me clear as day, and I start running, leaping over burning wood in an attempt to follow the cries.

Suddenly a big blast jumps in front of me. I fall, back hitting the ground with a thud. It burns, like a thousand nails pricking my body all at once. Like the hot sensation after your ears get pierced. Humid when you're in a sauna you're not old enough to be in. Then my throat clogs up, my eyes beginning to burn. I feel the heat soak into me. Burning smoke wafts into my nose. I close my eyes, stinging at first but damp tears roll down my cheeks. Cool. A faint scream reminds me where I am. I can barely move my arms, it seems like my brain has lost connection. I can't breathe, in a haste I push the wood away. It clatters to the ground. Standing up I dust the soot off of me. Everything hurts, but I need to save my sister.

She sits in a corner, surrounded by fire, her eyes as red as freshly picked raspberries. "Come on, we need to get out of here!" I shout. "What about mom? What about our village, our house?" Maeve exclaims. "Are we just leaving everything behind?" "Look, my number one priority right now is getting you out of here safe and all in one piece." I snap while grabbing her hand, dragging her out of the orange hue. We are safe from the fire but a part of me doesn't want to go, like we won't be safe somewhere else. Then it hits me like a bowling ball knocking over pins. We have to save our village,

“C’mon.” I say. My mom always makes us carry these ‘emergency backpacks’ to be prepared. I give one to my sister, and we set off.

“What are we looking for?” groans Maeve.

I hesitate, “I’m not really sure yet, but something to save the village.”

“Like, like that stone that mom always tells us about! What is it called...” She trails off. I look around for a place to set up camp, but all there is are big rocks and yellow grass. “The sun is starting to set,” I mumble. In a rush I pull out a little glass container from my bag.

“Give me my water.” I bark, slowly pouring some water into the glass. “Do you have something, something like a needle?” I ask Calatina.

“Would a bobby pin work?” she asks, taking one out of her hair. Ginger streaks fall to her waist. I take it from her hand, placing it in the water. After closing the container I pluck a blade of grass. “Ok, if the sun sets in the west, this must be south and this is north!” I murmur.

“What are you doing?!” Maeve hisses. I turn to her, displaying my newly made compass. I grab her arm as my eyes drift to a cave just behind her, and we run.

After a few hours of sitting in the cave I shout, “Dinner is ready.”

“Ohh, what is it!” chirps Maeve. I turn and show her a can. She groans, snatching it out of my hand.

“Don’t eat the whole thing! We need some for breakfast!” I yell. She lets out a sigh. *Why do I always have to take care of my twin when she was born first?*

I wake up to the sun in my eyes, but when I look around nobody is there. “Maeve!” I scream. No answer. I get up off the dead grass, straining my neck to catch a glimpse of someone. Then my eyes meet with a dark shadow on a rock in front of me. I huff and walk towards it.

“Maeve, that’s not funny” I yell. She snarls in response.

“I know it’s you, why do you always act like an animal?” Then a voice behind me mutters, “Uh, rude!” I spin around. Maeve.

“Wha-” I point to her in confusion, then spin around and point to the beast. My hand drops.

“Run.” I manage to grate out.

“What? Why?” She asks.

“RUN!” I thunder, grasping her wrist. The bear hears me, slowly inching towards us. Maeve yelps and I lean over, grabbing my bag. My sister does the same. As we run I look over my shoulder, the bear catching up to us. We run faster than we ever have.

“Quick, in here!” I bark. We flee into a skinny canyon. The bear right on our tails, but it gets stuck in the opening. We screech, running to the other side of the canyon.

“Whoa!” I exclaim, the grass was green but stained with blood. I look around, there lay dead bodies shot with arrows everywhere.

Maeve’s Perspective

Kathleen looked at me, “I think we need to go back.” she says.

“And become bear food, no way!” I exclaim. Just then an arrow whistles through my hair just missing my ear. Kathleen falls to the floor. The arrow caught her. Right in the heart. I start to panic. “Oh my gosh, here stay still, I’ll take the arrow out.” I croak, trying to hold back tears.

“No, don’t, it’ll only make me bleed more...” I can tell she is gasping for breath. I shut my eyes, hoping when I open them that we’ll be back home, safe. Then I feel a gust of wind in my hair. I open my eyes. My sister’s closed. I look beside me and gasp. An arrow. I slowly back away. Then another one lands just a couple inches from me. I am under attack. But I can’t just leave her there. Then a voice in my head pipes up. *A twin is a part of you, I won’t leave no matter where you go.* An arrow pierces my shoe, landing in between my toes. *Oh my gosh,* I take the arrow out and keep going even though my foot falls asleep. I run for what felt like days, hoping to find somewhere to go.

Growl, shuffle, shuffle. I look around. Nothing. *Ssssssss.* Probably just the wind. Then something pounces on me. I land with my face down in the dirt. Black. When I wake up I’m being dragged. Rope in my mouth. My wrists hurt, they’re also tied with rope. I tried to stand up then realize they have tied my ankles. They drag me along the ground, rope thread through the hole in my shoe created by the arrow. My head hits a couple of rocks along the way but mother used to say that my skull *was* a rock, so I’m not too worried. My head pounds, and my eyelids fall heavy. Before I know it, I am tied to a chair surrounded by green creatures. One of them kneels down in front of me and pulls down the rope in my mouth. “Who are you? *What* are you? Where do you come from?” It interrogates.

“Umm, I’m Maeve, I’m a human? And I’m from the village next to the swamp.” I mumble. “HUMAN! FROM THE SWAMP!” It cackles, his breath is di-scust-ing, blech! All at once drums start banging, the sound thrumming in my ears. Another green... thing emerges from a room with its hands on the shoulders of what looked like a—human! Then I realize I know him! “Jackson?” I whisper. He looks up and brushes his shaggy black hair to the side, “Maeve?!” He exclaims.

“Wh-what are you doing here? I mean during the fire I never saw you, you just disappeared.” I stutter.

“My part of the village got to evacuate and I would have told you, but I couldn't find you,” He holds his head in shame.

I gasp, “ I could have saved my mom. My sister —I would have never wound up here if you would have told me. And how did you end up here?” He told me when he woke up his group was out of sight, and wound up here, when the ogres took him in. Apparently the ogres gave him the ability to read minds.

“I’ve got it! We can save the village—” Everyone stops talking and stares at the entrance. I look around and gasp. In the doorway of the cave Kathleem stands. I jolt up and run towards her, hands still bound with tears streaming down my face. “H-how are you a-alive?!” I choke up. “Quick, we don't have much time.” She whispers.

I sniffle, “What do you mean?”

“I found a way to save the village. The person who saved me told me that there is something called the *Heart of Stone*. Apparently it has the ability to replace what was once lost, the same stone mom always told us about! But we have to act fast, we only have a limited amount of time.” She says excitedly.

Then Jackson pipes up, “No, she’s lying she doesn't want to save the village she’s going to use the stone to save herself *gasp* she’s using it to replace her heart!” Kathleen grabs my wrist causing me to jerk forward and replies, “What does this guy know he’s probably lost all his brain cells listening to these green weirdos.” That makes the ogres mad.

“Ok, first of all these green *weirdos* are really nice, even though they kidnapped me and tied me to the chair...” I take a step back from my twin. “And secondly I believe, *this guy*, because he can read minds.” I hold my head up high looking smug. Suddenly Kathleen grabs a sword from the rack and charges at me. I don’t know what to do so I ram my wrists upward, her sword meets

the rope binding them together and slices them. She pauses, surprised. Then anger floods her face and she leaps towards me, I don't know what to do so I grab a sword. Just as our weapons clash against one another an entire army appears in front of the cave entrance and in two milliseconds an entire war has begun. Blood stains the sides of the cave and wincing fills my ears. The nation is dying. I can tell the ogres have not been in a battle before, but they keep fighting, for their people and for themselves. At this moment I know I have to do something. "What did you do?! You're hurting my people!" I yell.

"Your people? Your people! You haven't even known them for *five minutes!*" She screams in my face. I turn my head to avoid the spit and notice her army has guns. There was no way we would win now. So I take a stand. "Why do you care, I was born to be a queen, maybe — this — is — my — DESTINY!!!" I push her to the ground and the room falls silent. "My entire *life* I was a shadow under you, the perfect girl, the one everybody loved. You always acted like the older one, the humble, caring, and honest one. Well today you proved you can be a liar and selfish so it's my turn to fix all the mistakes you've made and be a better person!" I hammer. Then I raise the sword up high and Kathleen shuts her eyes, knowing what comes next. *Everyone dies eventually*, I think, closing my eyes. I heave the sword down until I feel blood on my face. I crouch down and whisper in her ear. "May you die a peaceful death."

I never will regret my choices. Somebody so selfish and rude does not deserve to live. Living without a twin is much better than living with knowing that you could have saved so many innocent people's lives. After Kathleen takes her last breath all her soldiers leave with their heads hanging low. A search party comes in, *Miss Kathleen* they addressed me, *good thing we are identical*. I take the Heart Of Stone from them and place it in the middle of the cave. "We can save our village now." Jackson mutters.

I shake my head, "Look around, how many of them are wounded, and what are the chances we find our way home." I point out.

Jackson nods.

I take a deep breath. "I think I'm gonna restore what they lost— everyone gather around, bring the wounded too!" I hesitate, "O' mighty stone, please restore what was once our own, all the soldiers that were lost today, make green the new colour of yay." We all chant. Then the stone starts to glow and it shoots out beams of light to the dead and injured ogres, lifting them to the

sky and instantly healing them. The ogre who tied my wrists walks towards me, “This gesture you made for us today, you didn't have to, you could have left us here and used the stone to your benefit, but you chose to put others before you. This is what is called *Queen Material* and we would be honored to have you rule us.”