

Years 7 & 8  
3rd Place: Tuppence Cornelius  
Year 8, Perth Modern School

### Daisies

I was in my room when I heard them. Two sharp knocks at the front door. Confused, I peered through the curtains. Our neighbourhood was quiet, and it was unusual for anyone to have a visitor, let alone an unplanned one. Carefully, so as not to be seen, I studied the group of people at the door. Two adults and a girl, maybe a year younger than me. Somehow, as if sensing my presence, she looked at me, grinned and gave a small wave. I scampered back, shocked. I heard my parents start walking to the door, so I ran to catch up with them. Two more knocks. They opened the door. I hid behind my parents, staring at the girl who was still grinning at me.

“Hi! We’re moving in next door and wanted to meet our neighbours.”

“Oh, welcome! It’ll be nice to have people living next door again! If you have any questions about anything . . .” I zoned out of the adults’ conversation, trying to process this new information. The next-door house had stood empty for as long as I could remember, and I had never thought that we would have neighbours . . .

My Mum nudged me,

“Say hi to Zoe” she whispered in my ear. Zoe...that must be the girl’s name.

“Hey” I mumbled, looking at the ground. She smiled.

“Well, we best be going. We’ll see you later!”

With that final sentence, our new neighbours left.

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Not even half an hour later, I heard another knock at the door. Opening it I found myself face to face with Zoe. She thrust a bright yellow daisy into my hands.

“For you,” she said, smiling. “To remember the day we met!”

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I glared at my Mum as I threw my bags into the back of the car. She smiled, innocently. Behind me I heard footsteps, running towards me. I turned to see Zoe, bags in hand.

“Why does she have to come?” I whispered to my Mum.

“You two need to get to know each other better. You are neighbours, after all.”

I arched an eyebrow.

“And besides, what’s the harm in taking her for a walk with us?”

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I sat on a chair in Zoe’s room and faced her. My parents had forced me to stay over at her house for a night. No matter how many times I tried to point out how pointless it was, they still insisted. It hadn’t been too bad, though I would never admit that to them. Having noticed my reluctance to come earlier that day, Zoe asked,

“Have you been enjoying your time? You can go back to your house if you like.”

“No, it’s been fine, I guess. I’ve had a good time, you’ve been entertaining.”  
Zoe smiled her iconic grin. “I’m just amazing like that!”  
I chuckled.

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After that day, I started spending more time with Zoe. We began to walk to school together and spend time at each other’s houses. She wasn’t as bad as I originally thought. She was kind, funny, and a good friend. Soon, seeing Zoe became the highlight of my day, something which I always looked forward to, and enjoyed.

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Zoe and I stood in the garden, admiring the new gate in the fence separating our houses. Now we had our own path between our houses.  
“Our secret pathway,” Zoe grinned at me. “For us only!”

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Patiently, I stood next to the front door, waiting for Zoe to appear like she always did on this day every year. Hardly minutes later, I heard three small taps on the other side. I swung the door open instantly, to see Zoe, beaming as always. She thrust a bright yellow daisy, almost identical to the one she gave me on the first day we met and repeated the phrase she always said, one almost identical to first thing she ever told me,  
“To remember our friendship and the first day we met!”

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Time flew by quickly, and before we knew it, years had passed. Any problems or arguments we had only strengthened our bond. One day, however, the daisies stopped coming.

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That day, I had gone over to Zoe’s so we could study together. We’d sat down in her room with a plate of biscuits and had been looking over our notes, preparing for upcoming tests. At some point Zoe’s mum had come in, promising to come back with drinks. Zoe and I talked and talked. I cracked a joke. She laughed. And then, before I could think . . . I kissed her. Shocked, Zoe had stared at me, horror slowly dawning on her face. I’d turned away, ashamed, only noticing too late, that it wasn’t me that she had been staring at, but rather the figure of a person standing in the doorway. Everything after that was a blur. A dropped plate. A slammed door. The angry glares of Zoe’s parents. The bitter cold of the night air. And yelling. So much yelling.

When I came back to my senses, I was in my room, curled up in a blanket on my bed, tears slowly trickling down my face. Muffled shouts came from another room in the house.

“WHAT W . . .”

“. . . sorry for . . .”

“. . . CONTROL OR . . .”

“But . . . are you sure you can’t . . .”

“NO.”

And then . . . they stopped. The front door slammed, and it was quiet in the house once more. My mum came in, gave me a pitied look, and sat down next to me, trying to console me. I pushed her away. I wanted to be alone. Only then, could I try and forget everything.

I don’t know how long I laid on that bed for. My parents came in every now and again to put food and water next to my bed, and to plead that I eat something. They always came back to pick up the untouched plates later.

Finally, with a heavy heart, I got up. Immediately, my brain went to Zoe, and filled with panic, I ran to her house, ignoring my parents’ shocked and concerned faces. I banged on the door. No response. An old man watched me from across the road.

“Are ya lookin’ for the old owners of the house?” My heart dropped

“They left the other day. Didn’t they tell ya?”

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Years passed. The daisies wilted and died, yet I kept them in hope that Zoe would one day return. Everyone moved on, continued with their lives. Everyone but me.

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I walked into the building, waving at my colleagues as I passed them. I sat down at my desk, the morning sun shining brightly down upon me, but before I could start working, our supervisor walked in, followed by a woman.

“Everyone, this is our new teammate! Be sure to say hi to her.”

My eyes stopped on the woman. She was average height, wearing work clothes. Nothing about her particularly stood out. Nothing except a bright yellow daisy tucked in her dark brown bob. Her eyes locked on mine, and she grinned.