

Sparrowbrook Sorrow – Loukya, Year 6, VIC

Sparrowbrook had been a lovely coastal town – but not anymore. There had been luscious, emerald green oases of plant life in the centre, before the cyclone. There had been libraries before the cyclone. There had been offices, schools, medical clinics, gyms; before the cyclone. There had been people before the cyclone.

The inhabitants of Sparrowbrook woke up to piercing gales that shook the village to its roots. As the day went on, the winds developed into tornados. The clouds changed from small, fluffy, white wisps to dead-black monsters which threatened to engulf the sky with their immense size. Though unyielding, the sun had to give way to their power. The silver sea sent waves as large as cruise ships crashing onto the white, sandy bay. That winter was going to be like no other.

Mona was an underfed, 12-year-old girl who had lived at Jane’s Orphanage for as long as she could remember. With frizzy hair and an amiable expression, many people took her for granted in the orphanage.

Facing the devastation, Mona looked around her street. The roof beams had caved in on most of the houses, crushing any unlucky victims inside the house. But who would have been out with weather like that? Piles of rubble lingered around every corner, waiting to trip any of the scarce survivors of the cyclone. The orphanage that Mona was from was totally demolished. Where could she get food and water? Where would she find a place to live?

Mona trudged through the sleet. The mounds of debris, the aftermath of the lethal cyclone, created a maze for her to step through. Fatalities had been high, and though the thunder had passed and the sun had come out, Mona was still wary of the clouds above her head. After almost a day’s wandering, she was exhausted and still had only traversed less than a quarter of the town. Sitting down on the ground to gain her breath, she was soon fast asleep. She was soon woken up by a scraping sound. As she sleepily looked up, she noticed a little girl, around 5 years old, drawing pictures in the dirt with a stick.

“Hello” she mumbled, clutching a teddy bear. Mona was shocked that such a young child should be alone in a place like this.

“Hi, what’s your name?” she gasped, eyes wide.

“Miss Anne Constance Walter” came the reply.

“Okay, Anne - ”

“Constance Walter!” huffed Anne Constance Walter.

“Okay, Anne Constance Walter - ” Mona granted the name.

“Miss,” corrected Miss Anne Constance Walter.

“Well, Miss Anne Constance Walter, where are your parents?” demanded Mona.

“My parents went on a business trip away from the town a few days ago, leaving me at my aunt’s. After the cyclone, I couldn’t find her anywhere.” Upon which Anne Constance stamped her foot and dropped the teddy bear.

“Do you have any way to contact them?” Mona soothed.

“I’m not sure,” sighed Miss Anne Constance Walter.

“Don’t worry, we’ll talk about that later.” Mona hoisted Miss Walter on her shoulder and picked up the teddy bear. “Let’s go get help.”

The monotonous shades of grey morphed into midnight blacks as the sun started to descend in the sky. The curious pair made their way through the wreckage and the winding, deserted streets of the town of Sparrowbrook. Soon enough they saw peculiar happenings in the town. A gaunt, weary person, with a hunted look in his expression, peeped out from a face extensively muffled with scarves, a hat, a mask, and a pair of illuminating sunglasses. Money notes bulged out of his checkered trouser pockets; Money notes flowed out of his shirt pocket. There was even money notes in his socks!

“Who is it?” The stranger squeaked; his face turned paler every minute.

Before Mona or Anne Constance could answer, the wealthy, tense unknown gave a choking cough as he fell over some ruins. Though he was not hurt, his mask, hat and scarf came off – and so did his sunglasses. Mona immediately recognized him as Les Voleur Grande, a criminal who had made off with millions of dollars’ worth of jewels. His real identity and nationality could only be guessed at, but he was referred to using a French pseudonym since he had never told anyone his real name, only this pseudonym when carrying out fake transactions or orders from other master criminals. A prominent felon, he would have been promptly jailed had he been seen, but he had eluded capture by masking his face, living alone and other precautionary measures. He was alluded to by multiple authorities, but many seemed afraid to hunt him out, let alone arrest him.

With a wary look and an unsuspecting inspection of the thief, Mona and Anne Walter passed on to the inner parks.

A band of men approached the two. They looked like they were there to rescue the survivors of the cyclone, if any. But was there something evil in their smiles? Were they genuine? Or were they not? How would they be able to get them out of the wreck of the town? And how

were they able to arrive at the town in the first place? Doubts flooded Mona's brain. She was sure that these were not any ordinary rescue workers.

Indeed, though they carried backpacks full of rescue equipment, they skipped Mona and Miss Anne Constance entirely.

"Why are they here?" Miss Anne Constance Walter was puzzled; but soon their questions were put at rest and their worries arose.

The rescue workers started to break into a sprint, soon running with all their might towards Le Voleur Grande! Mona gasped with horror – however Miss Anne Constance Walter was too young to grasp what they were doing. As Mona saw ... they were looters! Friends of Le Voleur Grande, the 'rescuers' had come to steal from the town bank and rescue Le Voleur Grande as well in the process.

Mona grabbed Miss Anne Constance Walter and dashed off to the town's outskirts. Panting for breath, and perhaps jolting Miss Anne Constance Walter, Mona rushed through the wrought iron gates. She came upon a band of people, conscious but dazed.

As they came to their senses, they explained that some men, entirely fitting the image of the fake rescuers, had ambushed them and hit them with stout oak cudgels, felling them for some time. As they realized that Le Voleur Grande was inside the metropolis, they swiftly shut the gates, and hurried with Mona and Miss Anne Constance Walter to the closest local police station.

As soon as they came in, they saw a petite, brunette woman sobbing into the handkerchief. With her was a melancholy, mourning man and a miserable, weeping woman.

"MOM! DAD! AUNTIE!"

With this cry Miss Anne Constance Walter threw herself into the arms of her dad. Puffing, the true rescuers spouted the tale to the excited sergeant, their words tumbling into each other.

The sergeant quickly dispatched some armed constables to the town to capture Le Grande Voleur and his gang of thieves, as well as rescue any survivors. After a tense wait, the police returned with Le Grande Voleur, followed by his accomplices, in handcuffs.

"Well," considered the sergeant, thoughtfully. "This young lady here – wasn't Mona the name? – well she will have to get the reward for discovering the crook. It is five thousand dollars. So, Mona, won't you like you to say goodbye to your young friend?"

Crying softly, Mona approached the Walters, who were discussing something in low, serious tones. Suddenly, they saw Mona. The man smiled.

“Mona, Anne has told us that you are an orphan, and that your orphanage was destroyed. We considered the care you gave to Anne; so we would like to make you a Walter!”

And so the Walters adopted Mona. A very generous character as always, Mona decided to donate the money she had received to restore her hometown. That was the ending of the Sorrow of Sparrowbrook.