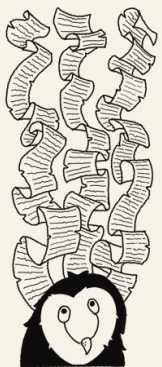




QUIRKY QUERIES & QUESTS FROM THE YOUNG WRITERS OF STORY STUDIOS AUSTRALIA

# TREMBLE: AN ODE TO STORYTELLING

LEILA RAFFERTY-GOULD



It's funny, the way I overthink things. The endless possibilities stretch out before me, an impossible sea of potential, a million different paths I reach out and trace with my fingertips. Imagination, they call it, an excellent aspect in moderation, but too much is paranoid – God, you have such an overactive imagination. Encouraged in children but witnessed as naivety – she has such a wonderful imagination – and you can just taste the condescension.

Imagination and creativity are not so different, but creativity is the one to which we bow; praise those that grasp it and wield it. Human nature in its essence is hypocrisy, for what would we be without it? Strip away all the unnecessary flairs, all the philosophy and wonder that leads us to great, vicious things, and we may as well die on the spot. The essence of human nature is hypocrisy and lies, the greatest of which is the utter delusion that we matter. Endlessly fascinating, endlessly wondrous, endlessly cruel.

It's funny, the way I overthink things. Sometimes I like to lose myself in it, weaving great stories. Sometimes I lie awake at night, wondering if I am merely making myself think these things, and isn't that a question? Sometimes I live in paranoia and superstition, certain all actions have consequences, seeing the terrible stories unfold before myself.

Sometimes I just give up, and let myself wander in all the impossibility.

Can you imagine, these stories? Think of the oldest story you know. Perhaps it is Cinderella, perhaps it is an ancient tale passed down from generation to generation. The brave hero, the terrible sacrifice, the slaying of the evil foe.

Stories are in their essence, I imagine, our way of grasping at the shape of the world around us, groping desperately in the dark for *rules*, for *because*, when indeed there is nothing but the possibility, and that is what terrifies us more than any other.

Some say there is a fine line between evil and good, when indeed there is no line at all, evil and good being impossibly intertwined, for one cannot exist without the other, and both

are reflections of the other and therefore themselves, mirror images running deeper and deeper, endless. All the little evils, for the greater good, the greatest lie that we tell ourselves, for what is the greater good but fake? The cost is always too great, and we blind ourselves so that we may not face that terrible truth.

Have you ever avoided stepping on the ants that crawl the pavement? Compassion and mercy both, aware of the great power you hold over them, stepping away. And yet have you ever crushed an ant hill, and never paid more thought to it? Compassion and mercy, generosity and kindness only hold up under the weakest light, lies that we tell ourselves.

*I am compassionate.*  
*I am merciful.*  
*I am generous.*  
*I am kind.*

And yet at least once in your life these traits will fail, for these are mere habits that we have taught ourselves, with the understanding that this is good. We are good at teaching these to ourselves, to others.

Have you ever been asked that question: The lives of a hundred strangers, or the lives of two you love? Try this: The lives of a thousand strangers, or *yourself*. For human nature is self-serving to the bitter end, though we may weave a cloak of selflessness around it, glamour it and shroud it from unseeing eyes around us until even we cannot pierce the deception.

I love stories, the way you can weave them, shape them, the terrible power that comes with the creation of your own world, the knowledge that with but a sentence you could crush everyone in that world and never pay more than a passing thought to it.

Can you feel it, when you type down those words? I like to think I can feel it more than most, though that is surely wishful thinking, the heaving sea of possibilities, endless paths that lead to endless ends, and yet nothing ever truly ends. The end of a story is no more than a convenient pause.

Can you see it, now? For a single second, rip the blindfold off your face before you pull it back down, because life without the blindfold is a terrible thing.

Rip off the blindfold, and *tremble*.





## MUDDLING MYSTERIES

# THE GREATEST MAGICIAN IN THE WORLD

ANONYMOUS REPORTER

There's a new magician in town and this reporter has witnessed his debut show firsthand.

Displaying immense confidence and showmanship, he amazed the crowd with many dazzling acts before unveiling his final act. He did not look tired, although he had been performing all day, swishing his squeaky-clean coat and stroking his picture-perfect moustache. He took a deep breath in to speak, and his eager audience leaned in, intrigued.

"Ladies and gentlemen, prepare to witness the most extraordinary disappearing act ever witnessed!" he boomed.

The crowd cheered and applauded, as he was not just your typical magician. Oh no. He called himself the **GREATEST MAGICIAN IN THE WORLD!** So, the audience cheered as loud as they possibly could. He coughed and instantly the crowd fell silent. Such was the power of fame, as many sources and websites say. He pulled out his wand, and cleared his throat again. The crowd was truly absorbed in his show by now, and many news channels were on the edge of their seats, not even bothering to comment.

Three men in black suits carried a painting onto the stage, the back facing the audience so they couldn't see. The crowd broke into a quiet whisper of hubbub, so he cleared his throat again. The crowd paid attention. With a flourish of his smarmy coat, he whisked the painting around. The lady in the painting stared out at the stunned crowd, her famous face still and lifeless.

"Behold!" he bellowed. "The Mona Lisa!"

The crowd gaped. They stared. They rubbed their eyes. The lights dimmed as the magician swept a long arm across the crowd. "I will now amaze you," he whispered. He waved his arms at the painting, chanting gibberish. The lights went out, and the crowd murmured. When the lights turned on again, all eyes turned to the painting.

The golden frame remained, as did the background. But the Mona Lisa herself had disappeared!

The magician laughed uproariously as the crowd passed out and the reporters for news and newspapers (such as this one) broke into rapid commentary, chatting about how big of a hit this would be. He cleared his throat, and everybody sat up. He waited a few moments to get the crowd's attention, and spoke. "The Mona Lisa has gone," he whispered again, unnecessarily. He waved his arm at the painting, and the lights dimmed again. When they turned on again, people looked at the painting. They had expected it to reappear. But it did not. The crowd murmured again. "It'll come back," they said. But the magician's face was far from mocking. His cheeks were red, and he was making ridiculous arm movements at the still-empty frame of the former Mona Lisa. The crowd murmured again. "That's probably not the real Mona Lisa, is it?" they whispered. The look on the magician's face told the answer very clearly.

Then the police came.

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## DOGGY DETECTIVE: THE MISSING BONE

RYAN SENDI

Doggy Detective, reporting for duty!

After solving the case of the perplexing missing treat, I thought I could finally relax and chase my tail. But just as I was about to unwind, a Pomeranian dog burst through my door, smashing it to pieces. So much for my home insurance!

The Pomeranian had brought me a new case: an ancient bone that had gone missing. I asked if it had been misplaced, but the Pomeranian assured me it had not. If it had been, someone would have seen it by now.

So, I rushed to the scene and found that the bone was indeed missing. Perplexed, I headed upstairs to check the security camera footage. It felt like I searched for hours, weeks, and even months, before realising that only 20 seconds had passed. Goodness, this detective stuff is hard work!

And then, I found it. The footage showed a black cat in a white cloth – Meow Meow! That meant I had to go to Cat Town. I snuck onto a jet, pretending to be a cat. It was rough, to say the least.

When I arrived at the museum in Cat Town, I snuck in through the vents as quietly as possible and managed to retrieve the bone without being detected! I then got back on the jet and flew home.

Another case solved by your resident Doggy Detective!



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## THE SANDY FILES PART ONE: SUSPICIOUS SCENE

GLASSY ELK

Sandy the detective arrived at the horrible incident that took place on the Puma Highway. A car crash had taken place, and a young girl named Mia had passed away.

Sandy managed to gather the last four people who she had contact with before her death.

Jamie, Mia's maid tiredly exclaimed and mentioned that she was cleaning the pool because it was a nice sunny day.

Nag, Mia's father, sadly informed Sandy that he had been watching his favourite TV show and that he didn't even know that Mia had been taken out of the car. Nag also added that he never saw Mia after she got home from school.

Sia, Mia's little sister, said she was chatting on the phone with her friends because they were meeting up at the park. But as soon as Sia realised that she was in the hospital, she cancelled going to the park immediately.

Riley, Mia's mother, was flabbergasted and said that she let Mia go on her own to the mall, as she knew she wouldn't do the wrong thing.

Soon Sandy took the car to the home base to get inspected. After observing the car thoroughly for several days, the agents finally found something suspicious. Turns out someone had poked a hole in the tire with a knife, and Mia had an accident a few kilometres away from her house.

Sandy knew one of the suspects had done this, and then checked the footage from a week ago. In the footage, out of the corner of her eye, she noticed Jamie leaving the kitchen with an enormous razor-sharp knife! At first Sandy thought Jamie was going to murder Mia, but then realised that didn't make sense, Mia had been in a car crash after all! But then she saw her making a hole in the tire of Mia's new car...

She gathered the four suspects again and explained that it was raining on the day the car crash took place, so the maid couldn't have been cleaning the pool. After all, the pool didn't have a roof above it to cover anyone cleaning the pool.

Jamie was arrested immediately and was escorted to the police station. For a few hours, they tried to make her speak, and give information on why she killed an innocent person. When her tummy started growling she gave up and commenced to explain everything.

She said that she was already kidnapped by another person, who made her poke holes in the tire. The police asked for the kidnapper's description, but Jamie had no clue as they always wore a mysterious grey hoodie, covering their appearance. Jamie only knew that the kidnapper wanted revenge on Mia for something. So they had Jamie pose as a maid in Mia's family.

HE WON'T ESCAPE...

*Follow the continuing adventures of Detective Sandy only in the **Quarterly Quill!***

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## THE BLAZING NEWS REPORTER

BLAS CAFFARO ROSSI



Blazing News Reporter reporting some blazing news here! I was walking my dog the other night when the strangest thing happened...

"Come on, boy!" I called my dog. Nothing.

Silence consumed the dark forest, filling me with fear and trapping me in my own cage. Suddenly I heard a whining sound that sounded horribly like my dog, Sebastian. I shattered out of my prison of fear and tottered my way over to the source of the noise. The noise stopped. I continued walking.

Then I saw it: behind a tree was a red eyed demon-looking version of my pet dog. I spotted something in its jaws. I gasped as I realised that it was holding my dog's severed head. It stood there, glaring at me in a way that made it seem like a demon. Then it leapt, flying through the air like a brave lion waiting to catch its prey.

"NOO!" I screamed, opening my eyes.... To find myself back in my room... Wait! Was it a dream? I slowed my racing heart and then froze. I had left Sebastian in my room. I slowly lifted my head, taking every precaution to not make any noise.

There, his bed! Laying in its resting spot in the corner of my room. Phew. But Sebastian wasn't in the bed. He must've gone downstairs for breakfast. I stood up, laying my feet on the floor, slipped on my slippers and started walking towards the door. I opened the door and I could already hear the crunching sounds that made me instantly realise that Sebastian was having breakfast downstairs.

"MUM!" I called. No reply. "MUM!?" I tried again. Still no reply. "What is she doing?!" I murmured to myself.

Then I heard whispering in my ear: DON'T GO DOWNSTAIRS! But I decided to go down anyway.

"Hi honey!" My mum said as she greeted me at the bottom of the stairs. "Can you come to the bathroom with me please?" she asked me.

"I'm okay." I replied, suspicious of why my mum would ever ask me that.

"COME TO THE BATHROOM NOW!" my mother said again, but this time it was an order. "Umm... okay?" I said, stumbling to the bathroom.

"Great honey, now can you lock the door?" she asked me again, now with a voice as sweet as lollies. Feeling regret, I locked the door.

"GREAT, NOW TIME TO DIE!!" something bellowed using my mothers voice. She lunged at me, her eyes red as blood. She then grabbed me by the collar and started biting me on the neck, on my arms, on my legs like a demonic dog! I finally stopped struggling when I realised all was lost and I let her devour me, until...

\*crunch crunch\* BOOF! That dog food was yummy! Now where is my owner? I heard banging in the bathroom. I waddled towards the bathroom and stood there, waiting for my owner to come out. The door opened and there was my owner! But what happened to her eyes? Why are they red?

"Hello, SEBASTIAN!" she said tauntingly.

"Boof?" I replied in a questioning tone. Then she lunged at me...

## DOVE

TEODORA CAFFARO ROSSI

A feather like life so light yet as heavy as the moon.

Sometimes it's impossible to see and it feels like nothing,  
nothing at all.

This feather comes from a white bird with olives in this mouth,  
but it looks trapped,

trapped but hopeful

and that is why hope is the thing with feathers.

It goes north and then heads south soon east and west as if it is lost  
its feet are clinged and locked together

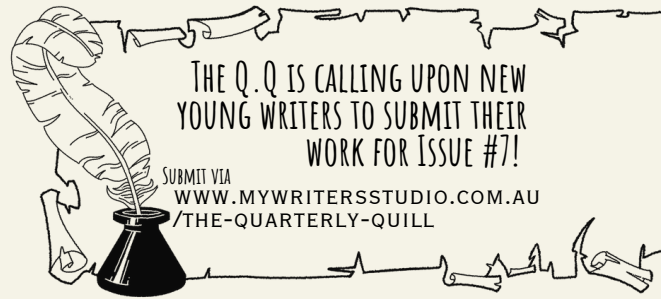
yet its wings are free like it's trapped

and yet it still has freedom.

"Does it have a place to go?" I asked myself.

You know maybe just maybe it will save millions of lives

in a place called Palestine.



## THE CAT AND THE MOUSE

PEPPER H

The cat and the mouse, enemies at best,

For the cat, catching this mouse is a very big test.

He chases the mouse all through the night,

Giving the mouse a dreadful fright.

By the time the sun rises, the mouse has escaped,

Back to her den, barely scraped.

When the cat's owner awoke,

The cat was sound asleep,

exhausted after his night time escapade.

## RIGHTS

ELLIE WEEKS

Some people think there's two ways to be,

But the truth is there's so much more, surely you agree?

There's trans and queer and bi and straight,

People are who they are, mate!

Rainbow stands for pride,

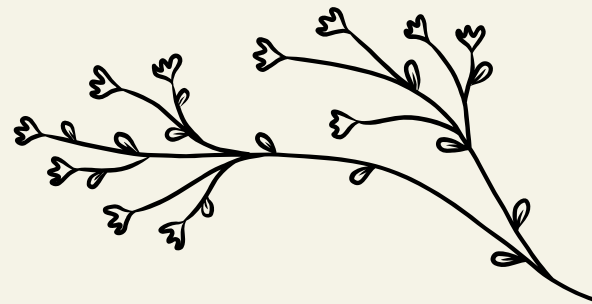
So no one should have to hide,

LGBTQ+ must have rights,

So become an ally tonight!

There's so much more you can do,

But support would be great from you!



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## RAINING CATS, DOGS AND MORE!

ELLA LUEDECKE

Up in New York today there is some bamboozling news that just must be shared. So, let's get started!

In Manhattan, New York, there has been some rather amusing weather that is very questionable. It appears that it has been raining animals lately. It all started on Monday; the animals have changed every day. Raining pigs on Monday, warthogs on Tuesday, roosters on Wednesday, frogs on Thursday and puppies on Friday!

Most people were very surprised, some a bit annoyed and some are even trying to figure out how these creatures are getting up to the clouds and how they are coming back down. Lots of people assume that someone stole all the animals and put them up there, even though that would be a bit... absurd it could be true since there have been lots of animals going missing, but why would someone do that and what for?

Anyway, we are going to leave it here for now, but I'll update you about it next week.

And have a happy Friday everybody! :)

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## FLASH FICTION

### FLOWER

CORINNE GLASS

I always thought people could be reflected through flowers. Impolite and sarcastic people were Borages, while pure and compassionate people were Lotuses. Adventurous and brave people were Phacelias, while cautious and careful people were Begonias. He always confused me though. I could never figure out what type of flower he was. Rude and very sarcastic, yet towards me, only me, compassionate. Adventurous and bold, yet cautiously chose his battles, as though his life depended on winning them. No common traits... except loyalty. Unwavering determination... like Alstroemerias. My favourites, purple-tipped white petals, delicate... humble, almost. Like him.



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## OWLBURTA'S OWL-XCELLENT RECOMMENDATIONS

### Books:

- For younger readers: *All Four Quarters of the Moon* by Shirley Marr. A lovely story about a young girl and her family trying to find their place in a new country. 5/5!
- For older readers: *A Good Girls' Guide to Murder* by Holly Jackson. A fun, twisting mystery that had me on the edge of my seat! 4/5, and the series only gets better and better as it goes on!

### Films:

*Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.* (2023) A delightful family film for all ages! A wonderful portrayal of growing up, friendship and religion. Plus a bird makes an appearance! 5/5!

*Polite Society* (2023) is a HOOT! A fun, action packed film about a girl who wants to be a stunt double, but has to take down her sister's evil future mother-in-law! 4/5, so much fun!

### TV Shows:

For younger watchers: *Hilda*. Maybe the cutest, most wholesome show ever? A group of friends uncover some fantasy secrets in their quaint English village. 4/5!

For older watchers: *His Dark Materials*. Based on a series of fantasy novels, this show follows fiery young Lyra as she embarks on a dangerous fantasy adventure to rescue her best friend, involving witches, armoured bears, an aeronaut, and a dangerous, dangerous conspiracy... 4/5! (The books are 5/5 of course!)

## FIRE CONTROL POTION

PERRY NUNN

### Ingredients:

- 1 Litre dragon tears
- 1 tsp pixie dust
- 200mL Magma Cream
- 1 cup powdered dragon teeth
- 1/3 cup green fire essence
- 1 Tbs devil's dust
- 4 rubies
- 3 golf ball-sized embers

### Method:

1. Put the dragon tears and pixie dust into a pot and boil over a fire until the dust has completely vanished.
2. Add magma cream, powdered dragon teeth and the essence of green fire into a medium pot or bowl. Mix.
- 3.
4. Crush the rubies, then put them on a plate with the fresh burning hot embers from the fire.
5. Once the crushed rubies are hot put them into the bowl with the green fire essence, magma cream and powdered dragon teeth.
6. Slowly pour in the dragon tears and pixie dust while speaking the following words:
7. Fire fire, higher higher, brighter
8. We follow your flames into the sky
9. Bowing close to your heat
10. Hang the pot over your fire and let simmer for 24 minutes exactly.
11. After your potion has boiled, lightly scatter devil's dust over the top to give it a fiery surge.
12. Pour the mixture into your bottle while speaking the following words:

*May I take your heat*

*The burning retreat of fire may I*

*Control your stunning, fiery blaze*

The potion will be ready to use after 5-10 minutes.

### Using the potion:

1. Pour out a spoonful of the potion and taste. Walk over to the fire and stare into the flames.
2. If the fire does not want you to control it, it will turn purple for a half second. If this happens this fire is not for you. Try a different fire.
3. If it likes you and accepts you it will turn green for a half second, that mean you can put your hand through it without it burning you. Be aware that the fire will cling onto your arm. Do NOT shake it off.
4. To take it off simply wave your arm three times through the fire and it will be gone.
5. The potion will last for a duration of 6 minutes.
6. When stored above 20 degrees the potion will last for 7 years.

## HOMEMADE POTATO CHIPS

AUDREY NG

### Ingredients:

- 3-4 Freshly washed potatoes
- Salt
- And Oil

### Utensils:

- Air fryer
- Knife
- Peeler
- Chopping board
- Tong
- Plate
- Love



### Here are the easy steps:

1. Wash *the* potatoes (if you haven't already)
2. Peel the potatoes
3. Chop the potatoes in half
4. Chop the half potatoes in half again
5. Cut up the potatoes in chipped shaped
6. Put the potatoes in a plate
7. Add a little sprinkle of salt and oil
8. Mix it (put a glove on!!!)
9. When you mix it equally, then put it in the airfryer
10. Next plug in the wire
11. Set a timer for 10 to 15 mins
12. When there is 5 mins left, open the air fryer and turn the chips over carefully
13. set another 7 mins
14. Use the tongs to grab up the hot chips! (When the timer ends, of course!)
15. Enjoy with your family! (*Trick* people and say they are Maccas chips, they taste like it!)

*PS: Can you find the hidden message?*



## A NOTE FROM THE EX-EDITOR

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Greetings and welcome to the Winter 2024 edition of the Quarterly Quill!

As you know, the Quill is a place for all our bold and clever scribes to let their creativity shine - from our Story Studios home base here in Carlton, Melbourne, or from living rooms all over the galaxy via our online community.

If you've been here to our headquarters on Elgin Street, you will have spent time under the watchful eye of our feathered mascots Owlbert and Owlberta. They're generally pretty quiet types; for years they've sat up there on the shelves, amongst the books, minding their own business and letting the writers get on with what they do best.

But last week, much to the surprise of Manager Mathilde and myself, our two in-house owls acted most uncharacteristically. We were in the kitchen, wreathed in the fumes of our latest peppermint tea, awaiting the arrival of the next class of young imagineers to come stomping in out of the cold, when we heard the kitchen door thump closed behind us.

Imagine our surprise when we turned to find ourselves cornered by a pair of, it turns out, rather opinionated plushy owls. They had clearly rehearsed their pitch; Owlbert and the smaller, fiercer Owlberta (of whom i am a bit scared) made it clear to us that they would like to assume editorial control of the Quarterly Quill, and be in charge of the design and layout, starting this issue.

Mathilde and I didn't need a lot of thinking music, truth be told. We have a lot on our plates - especially Thilde - what with wrangling the profusion of prodigious pint-sized poets that patronise the place - we were only too happy to let the studio birds take over editing and layout duties of our quarterly periodical. It's a big job, and owls have the advantage of being awake all night.

So here are the fruits of their labours. I must admit to being a bit personally taken aback by the number of pictures of themselves they have included. I will leave it up to you to decide if their new-look Quarterly Quill is a move in the right direction. And if it's not to your liking? Blame the owls.

- SCOTT



**CALL FOR REVIEWERS AND CRITICS  
IN THE QUARTERLY QUILL'S "WRITE STUFF" SECTION!**

Are you passionate about the written word? Have an opinion about a cool new game or a frustrating movie you'd like to share? Well! the Quarterly Quill is looking for individuals like you to contribute to our Write Stuff column!

**HOW TO APPLY:**

If you're interested in becoming a reviewer or a critic for the Quarterly Quill's Write Stuff section, please submit via our portal:  
[WWW.MYWRITERSSTUDIO.COM.AU/THE-QUARTERLY-QUILL/](http://WWW.MYWRITERSSTUDIO.COM.AU/THE-QUARTERLY-QUILL/)



## **FAN-TASTIC FICTION**

FANFIC FROM THE YOUNG WRITERS OF STORY STUDIOS AUSTRALIA  
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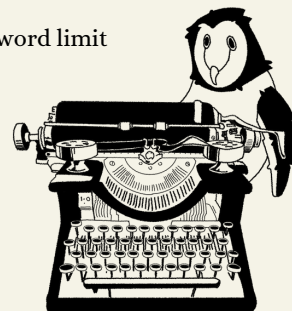
# BECOME A PUBLISHED WRITER!

## SUBMIT FOR THE QUARTERLY QUILL'S SIXTH ISSUE!

Are you interested in submitting to our next issue of the *Quarterly Quill*?  
Well there's no time like the present!

Here are the sections...

- **Features Fancies** (for non-fiction, creative non-fiction, memoir, and more) 500 word limit
- **The Write Stuff** (for any and all reviews) 500 word limit
- **Muddling Mysteries** (for investigations and crimes reportage) 500 word limit
- **Poets of the Quill** (for poems of any kind) 12 line maximum
- **Flash Fiction** (for super short stories) 100 words maximum
- **Curiosity Corner** (for bizarre advertisements) 200 word limit
- **Recipe Revolution** (for recipes) 500 word limit
- **Super Sport Section** (for fictional sports news) 300 word limit
- **Wacky Weather** (fictional weather reports) 300 word limit
- **Whimsy Wit & Quirky Quips** (for jokes) 5 jokes max
- **Owlbert's Advice Column** (questions for our wise and wonderful studio owl and Assistant Editor – Owlbert) 200 words max



Submit via our website:

[WWW.MYWRITERSSTUDIO.COM.AU/THE-QUARTERLY-QUILL/](http://WWW.MYWRITERSSTUDIO.COM.AU/THE-QUARTERLY-QUILL/)

## QUIRKY CROSSWORD

### BOOK CHARACTERS

#### DOWN

1. A young girl who discovers she has Other parents
2. He wants to be a real boy!
5. Harry Potter's smartest friend
7. Harry Potter's sworn enemy
9. Matilda's evil principal
10. The true king of Narnia
11. A male dragon from the tribe of NightWings

#### ACROSS

3. He must return the ring!
4. Demi-god; daughter of Athena
6. The grandson of Grandpa Joe
8. Insists her name is spelt with an 'e'
12. The youngest Baudelaire orphan
13. Peter Pan's very jealous fairy friend
14. His last name is 'Do'
15. The name of a rabbit and the name of a teenage superhero

