

THE MEMORY VAMPIRES

BY: RYAN WOLF

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GRL: N • DEWEY: 811 • ©2024 • 5 1/4" x 7 1/8" • 160 pp.

Excerpts from other Books within this Series, Written in Verse, About the Author Section, High / Low Content

Twins Adam and Adriana Carver couldn't be more different these days, but they are forced to spend time together on a family vacation in a remote New England village. Though the neighborhood looks charming, the locals are spacey and distant. They seem barely able to speak. Soon the twins' parents begin forgetting everyday things—the locations of keys and parked cars. This quickly escalates into something far more troubling. As the adults start losing their core memories, the twins must hunt down the nightmarish cause of this tragedy. But the monsters in this peaceful seaside community prove far darker and more threatening than anything they might have imagined.

I nudged Adriana.
But she wouldn't
look up
from her phone.

"See the lighthouse?"
I asked.

At the end
of the pier,
a white tower
stood over
the waves.
Beyond it,
tiny boats sailed
beneath cloudless skies.

"Uh-huh,"
she said.

She still
didn't bother
looking.

Adriana used
her phone
more than I
ever used mine.



We turned again.
The harbor
disappeared behind
more maples.

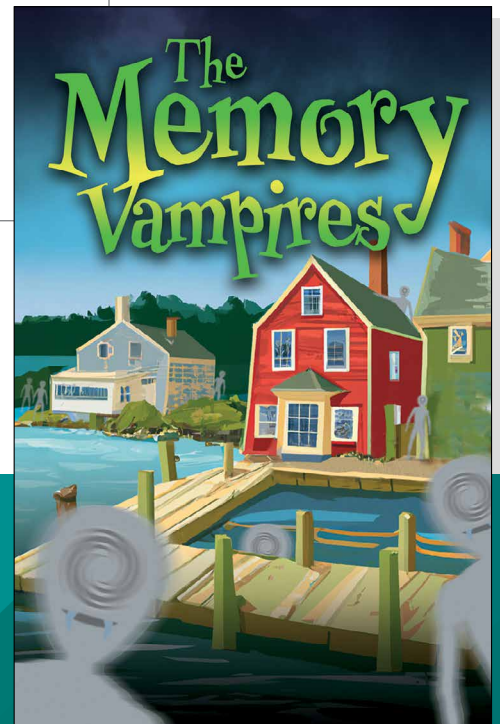
"We're staying near
the old mines,"
Mom told us.
"They dug for
silver and lead
around here.
Right up
until the 1910s."

"I thought
we were staying
on the water,"
I said,
disappointed.

"We are,"
Dad said.
"By a little river
that flows
into the bay."



Ryan Wolf is the author of novels for young adult and middle grade readers, as well as the *Creepy Critter Keepers* chapter book series for children. He has also published stories, poems, and nonfiction, and appeared in episodes of the paranormal investigation series *Death Walker*. Ryan holds his B.A. from Canisius College and his M.A. in the humanities from the University of Chicago. He currently resides in Buffalo, New York, with his wife and daughter.



MY OWN SPIN

BY: DAVID ARO

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Twelve-year-old Arlo doesn't want to stand in his big sister's shadow on the basketball court. He wants to do something different. Something he can call his own. A Ping-Pong master at home, Arlo decides to try his hand at the Olympic sport of table tennis. But he quickly learns it is a completely different game than the one he grew up playing in the basement. Also, he's not the only kid who takes Ping-Pong seriously. As Arlo enters the world of competitive table tennis, he finds himself challenged unlike ever before. Will Arlo give up when it gets hard or find a way to persevere against all odds?

CANDY WRAPPER

Of course, Zoe starts with the jokes.

I feel like the empty candy wrapper shoved under the seat.

My thoughts are folded over on each other. And sticky.

I like Ping-Pong. A lot.

I thought I was pretty good. Before today.

If I'm going to lose that bad, maybe it would be better if it were to Zoe?

At her game of basketball. On the driveway.

At least then she'd help me,

instead of making jokes about me losing to a man with a cane!



LEAVE ME ALONE

I bounce a ball on the bottom of the racket's handle.

It isn't loud enough to block the knock at my door.

Of course, it's Zoe coming back for more.

I know I give you a hard time.

It's my way of showing you I care.

But I can't leave for college tomorrow with you still mad at me.



David Aro is the author of several stories for young readers, including the *Alton Heights All-Stars* hi/lo series and the picture book *Slam Dunk Sammy*. He is a former Collegiate All-American basketball player, conference player of the year, and college coach. When he is not spending time with his family, coaching his kids, or playing table tennis, he follows his passion of writing children's books. You can visit him online at www.davidaro.com.



TELL ME WHY THE JACK PINE GROWS

BY: D. J. BRANDON

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Meadow is enjoying a carefree country summer, tending her beloved 4-H chickens and freely exploring the outdoors. Content at home with her father, brother, and Nanna, Meadow wishes she could stay a kid forever. Everything changes the day the man in the green car stops her on the road, alarming her with an uncomfortable request. The brief encounter fills her with a strange new anxiety that she can't share with anyone. As fear fills her every move, she makes her world smaller and smaller to feel safe. But when a friend is also approached by the driver of the green car, Meadow realizes she must talk about what happened to protect others. Like the jack pine growing from the rocky cliff, Meadow can't fight growing up any longer, but maybe she can change her corner of the world for the better.

MY FREEDOM WAS THE CREEK

and the road
that took me there.

I close the chicken gate
and wander
down
the
driveway.
Glancing to the right.
Then to the left.

My eyes follow
the rolling hills
of County Road Nine.

And my heart
trembles.
*What if the green car
comes back?*

Will I
ever
dare
to walk our road
again?

THE CONSTANT CHIRP OF CRICKETS

makes the night air
BUZZZZ.

Through my open bedroom window,
moonlight seeps.

It forms
a pool of light
across my bed.


On the walls,
eerie shadows
dance.

The rest of the house
is sleeping.

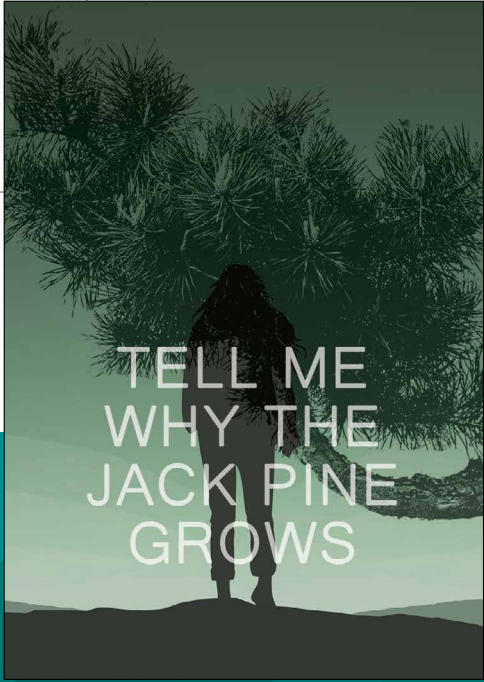
But
I
am

wide awake.

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D. J. Brandon had a long career in nursing before setting out to turn her dream of writing stories for kids into a new career. West 44 Books' *Graveyard Gruber* series followed. Now, with *Tell Me Why the Jack Pine Grows*, she has written her first novel in verse for middle grade. D. J. is the mother of two grown children and has welcomed five beautiful grandchildren who inspire her writing every day. Visit her at www.djbrandonauthor.com.



101 PROM NIGHTS

BY: D. E. DALY

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Halley had a perfectly fine junior prom with her two best friends. Yet when she wakes up the next morning, it's the day of junior prom. Again. And again. And again. Guided by her genre-savvy knowledge of movies and books, Halley assumes there's some burgeoning disaster the universe wants her to fix ... if only she knew what. The only way to find out is by delving into the lives and secrets of her classmates, both her friends and those she's been in school with for years and yet barely knows. Prom night after prom night, Halley begins to suspect that maybe everyone's a bit of a disaster—and maybe she doesn't know anyone as well as she thinks.

Prom Math

Mariana didn't dance with anybody.

Except me. And Roman, of course.

But we don't count.

Roman
(my other Actual Friend)
and Mariana
and me:

we're kind of
one person.

Roman helped us
pick our dresses.
He bought our corsages.
And we three
went to prom.
Like we went to kindergarten:
together.

Mariana
spent one quarter of prom upset.
In the bathroom.

So I spent one quarter of prom
with her.
In the bathroom.

I finally got her out,
because
we couldn't leave Roman
alone.

We spent the next quarter of prom
looking for him.

We found Roman outside,
with theater friends.
Trying a vape pen.
Despite his asthma.
And allergies.

Prom's last half:

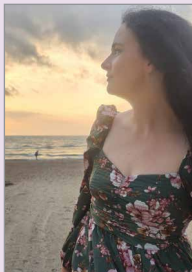
- Roman coughed.
(Constantly.)

- We found the buffet stations.
(The good stuff? Gone.)
(The rest? Cold.)

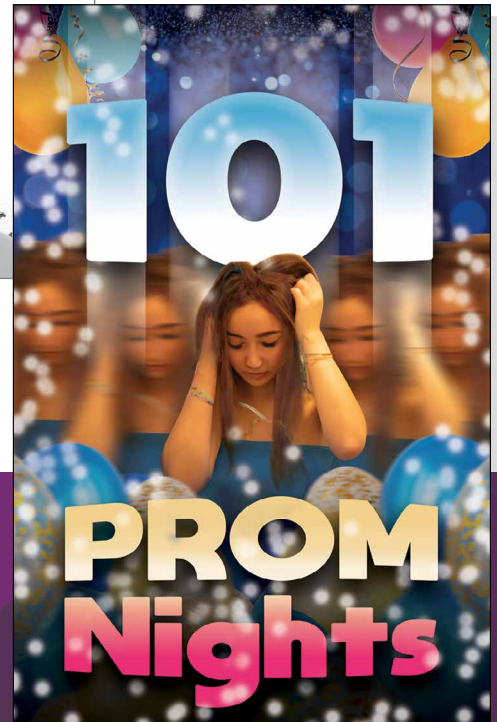
- Watched our classmates.

(Plus Mark Peterson's date,
who *doesn't go to our school*, and who
hung around alone.)

And we three
danced.



D. E. Daly has never been caught in a time loop but does watch *Groundhog Day* every year. She lives in Buffalo, New York. She studied writing in New Orleans and is also the author of the supernatural West 44 middle grade series *The Z Team*. Once upon a time, her own prom dress was hot pink, and she'd wear the same one if she could do it all over again.



DEFINITELY NOT A LOVE STORY

BY: CLAUDIA RECINOS SELDEEN

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Excerpts from other Books within this Series, Written in Verse, About the Author Section, High / Low Content

Ana has big plans to be an important writer. But not a romance writer, like her mom, because she's seen what love does to people. From her parents' constant bickering to her sister's endless string of broken hearts to her best friend's on-again, off-again relationship, love is messy and Ana wants no part of it. When a school writing contest pairs her up with Alejandro, a notorious serial dater, Ana is annoyed. Alejandro is everything she can't stand—romantic, sentimental, and idealistic. But Ana is willing to put her qualms aside for the sake of the big prize: publication. As the two work together to create a winning story, Ana finds herself impressed with Alejandro's writing. But despite their new connection, there's no way she can fall for him. After all, she's sure this is definitely not a love story.

SOMETHING NEW

Writing class usually starts with 15 minutes of quiet writing.

But today, Mr. Diaz flips open his laptop.

Something new, he announces.

He clicks a key and the home page for the newspaper fills the overhead screen.

Two words catch my eye.
FICTION CONTEST!
And my heart begins to drum.

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THE CONTEST

Mr. Diaz explains the contest rules.

One short story.
No more than 2,000 words.

The winner will be published in the paper.

I sit back and smile.
I have dozens of short stories on my laptop.

Any one of them could win the prize.

But Mr. Diaz holds up a hand.

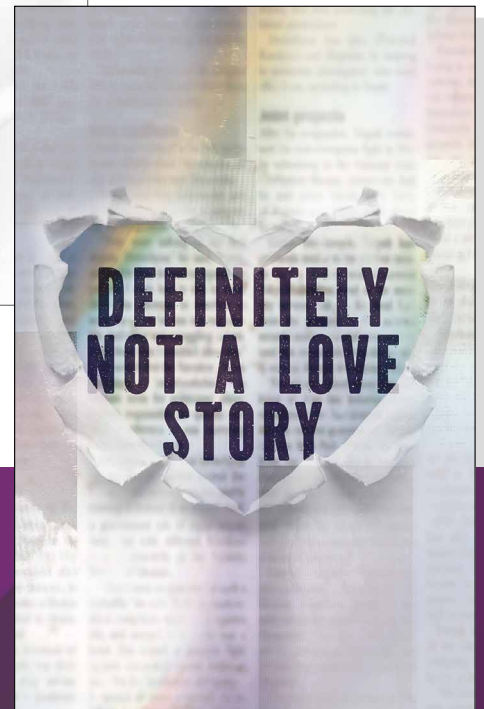
The theme of the contest is teamwork, he says.

All entries must have two authors.

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Claudia Recinos Seldeen is the author of the young adult novels *To Be Maya*, *Catch Me if I Fall*, and *Everything I Know*. Her work has appeared in *The Amphibian Literary Journal* and *First Peoples Shared Stories*. Claudia is a first generation Guatemalan American. When not writing, she is either playing video games with her husband and son, or flying through the air on a trapeze. Find out more at www.recinoseldeen.com.



THE LAST STAR CHASER

BY: DEMITRIA LUNETTA

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About the Author Section, High / Low Content

When a solar flare engulfs an interstellar space route, the vacation ship *Star Chaser* crash-lands on a hostile planet. Sixteen-year-old Zenna finds herself separated from her parents and in charge of her younger brother. They must traverse the alien wilderness to find her parents—if they are even still alive. Worse yet, *Star Chaser* wasn't the only ship to crash. Zenna soon comes face-to-face with juvenile delinquents that were being transported to a prison planet, and the last thing they want is to be rescued. But Zenna may find an ally in the stoic Arron. Strong and silent, he may just be the help she needs to reunite with her family and make it off the hostile planet alive.



My (clueless) parents
thought this (space) cruise
would be the perfect (family) vacation.

It's one of the first (luxury cruise) spaceships
(my dad gushes) and my mom
thinks it will be good for us (as a family).

It's the last of its kind (my mom says).
What I hear is that it's old (and outdated).
And should be broken down (for parts).

My abnormal (eight-year-old) brother
Kain (the pain) is all about it.
He's obsessed with space (the total astro-geek).

Kain with his (floppy) brown hair
and (big) brown eyes
and (goofy) smile.

2



Of course,
no one asked me.

So here I am.

Forced on this trip.

Forced to stand in the lobby of the *Star Chaser*.

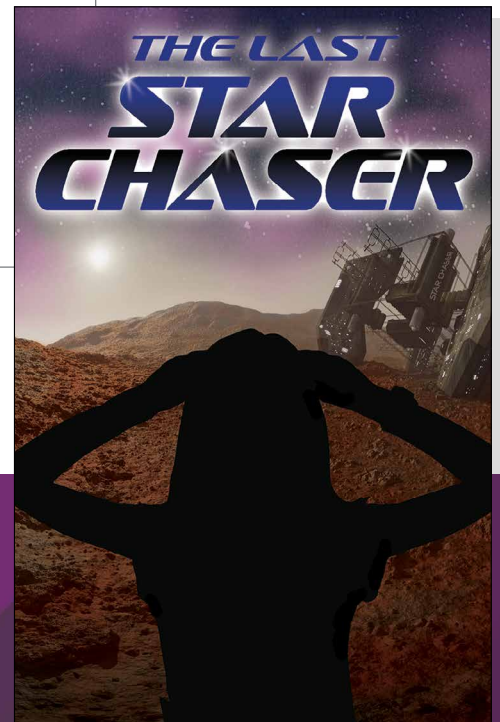
Forced to watch out the big windows.

Forced to look out at a whole lot of nothing.

But I won't be forced to pretend that I like it.



Demitria Lunetta is the author of many YA and middle grade books including: *The Fade*, *Bad Blood* (Delacorte), and the sci-fi duology, *In the After* and *In the End* (HarperTeen). Her hi-lo books include *Bitter & Sweet* and the verse novels *Our Broken Earth* and *The Shining City*. Her graphic novel, *Anti/Hero* is now available from DC Kids. Find her at demitrialunetta.com, on Twitter @DemitriaLunetta and on Facebook at facebook.com/DemitriaLunettaAuthor.



SAMSON & DOMINGO

BY: GUME LAUREL III

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Excerpts from other Books within this Series, Written in Verse, About the Author Section, High / Low Content

Samson and Domingo fall in love during the summer before their junior year of high school. But Samson is the star player of Weslaco North's football team and Domingo is a French horn player for Weslaco South's marching band. Once school starts, their new love is challenged by those who don't agree with their rival schools mixing, especially Domingo's older brother, Pablo, a football player for South. As if that wasn't enough, Samson's Olympian-like athleticism is shrouded in mystery; the source of his strength is a secret he has vowed to keep his entire life. As Samson and Domingo's love blossoms, Samson learns to trust Domingo more than he has ever trusted anyone before, and Domingo opens his heart once again after heartbreak. But will their love be Samson's downfall?

Samson's Hair

is too pretty for a jock's head.
Equal parts dark cocoa and milky smooth.
Runs longer than any high school math class.
I have no clue how he fits it all into
his football helmet for Friday Night Lights.

Samson Montaña & Domingo Paloma

We are the definition of star-crossed lovers.

Pop vs. Indie
Meathead vs. Band geek

Attending rival high schools
in the same city

widens the divide.

But, it doesn't keep us from
texting each other around the clock.



Gume Laurel III is a Texan, native to the Rio Grande Valley on the southernmost border. For the past decade, he has dedicated himself to crafting literary works that promote inclusion and showcase diverse characters with intersectional identities. The bulk of Gume's writings are focused on underrepresented groups, especially those from the communities he is a part of: Latine and queer. When he isn't writing, Gume can be found getting lost on a hiking trail with his dogs Blu and Mouse. For more info on what he's up to, check out GumeLaurel.com and @TX.Author on Instagram.



SIGN ME UP

BY: C. H. WILLIAMS

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Alyssa is an ice skater who prefers to skate alone. She lives in rural Alaska, where a quiet frozen lake is her happy place. But now she's moving to sunny, loud Los Angeles. As the new girl in town, Alyssa isn't sure if she'll ever fit in. When the local roller derby team takes Alyssa under its wing, she's not sure she wants to trade her ice skates and solitude for roller skates and teammates. Alyssa decides to leave her comfort zone. Will she find her place, or will the pace and volume of roller derby be too much to handle?

"I GUESS I'M FREE"

The words barely leave
my mouth (and hands) when—

"It's settled then." Jay quirks one thin brow.

I flinch as Saffy takes my phone.
"I'll message you the address."

She adds her number,
then calls herself.

And I just sit there.
Stunned.

"Do you need a ride?"

I nod. My voice lost.

"Send me your address, yeah?"

I find myself nodding again.

She hands back my phone.

What have I done?

44

THE ROLLER RINK

is 10 times the size
of our old town hall.

Where we gathered
for concerts,
and plays,
and dances.
(The entire school.)

All of us crammed into
the same small space.

But really, there weren't
many of us at all.

This room is huge,
but the ceiling is low.

There's a mirrorball
in the center.

And neon signs
scream—'80s RETRO.

I feel dizzy.
Like I've traveled back
in time.

Someone grabs my shoulders.
"Let's do this!"

45



C. H. Williams once thought roller derby was a fictional sport. The day she discovered it wasn't, she purchased her first pair of quad skates, and signed up for her local team. C.H. is a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, and is a strong advocate for queer youth, and promoting inclusion in her stories. She currently resides in the Welsh mountains with her nerdy husband, and their wonderful daughter, along with a growing collection of rocks, sticks, and feathers from their adventures together.



THE SPACE YOU LEFT BEHIND

BY: ONA GRITZ

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Sixteen-year-old Cara has cerebral palsy. Self-conscious about her limp, Cara is convinced her disability is what causes boys to always place her in the friend zone. This summer, it seems to be happening again with her new crush, Josh. The two of them are huge fans of a popular mystery podcast and, as it happens, Cara has a real-life mystery of her own. She's never been that curious about the donor who is her biological father, but now that Josh shows an interest in learning his identity, she's all in. As Cara starts exploring, she stumbles upon a family secret that just might explain the feeling she's always had that something important is missing from her life. But with this knowledge, her life may never be the same again.

Josh Goes

back to volleyball practice.

And I go back to my book.
But I can't remember
anything about the story.

Even when I start again
from the first page,
the words
mean nothing at all.

22

I Float Home

Well, really, I limp.
As usual.

But I feel light
and happy.

Tomorrow,
I'll tell Josh
yes.

After all, he's
into mysteries.

And I guess
I am a mystery.

Not that
it means
he's into me.

But it's a start.

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Ona Gritz holds a master of arts in poetry from the creative writing program at New York University. She is the author, most recently, of *Everywhere I Look*, a memoir. Her writing has appeared in *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Ploughshares*, *Salon*, and many other places. Ona's earlier books include *August Or Forever*, a Reader's Choice and Wishing Shelf finalist in middle grade fiction; *Geode*, a finalist for the Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award and *Tangerines and Tea: My Grandparents and Me*, a Nick Jr. Family Magazine Best Alphabet Book of the Year and Scholastic Magazine Teacher's Pick. She teaches creative writing to teenagers with disabilities through the Numberless Dreams Project. This is her first book for teen readers.

