The Story Contest

My hand shook as I reached for the pen hanging underneath the sign posted on the library wall. My head buzzed with anticipation as I carefully wrote my name on a line. My teacher would be so excited when I tell her!

Crumple, crumple, whoosh, ding! I growled. When I had signed up for the library's short story contest earlier in the day I had not given a second thought to what I would write. Writing a story isn't that hard right? WRONG! I had been sitting at my desk for almost an hour, trying to brainstorm, and I still didn't have one single good idea. My trash bin was almost overflowing with all of the ideas I had ripped out of my notebook and tossed over my shoulder. Not all of them had landed in the trash bin either. Wrinkled paper was strewn all over the floor of my bedroom. I sighed, and then rested my head on my hand to start thinking for the billionth time that day. I thought and I thought until… AHA! What if I did something Sci-Fi like, a spaceship crashing to earth! And maybe the aliens could make friends with the humans! Hmmm, sounds ET…, but not if the story was about the *space journey* trying to get back to the alien's home planet! Here goes nothing….

It was a bright Saturday afternoon, and I was playing at the park with my older sister when the spaceship crashed. We were on the monkey bars, but when we saw the flaming wreckage fall into the field we decided we needed a closer look. We stepped up cautiously, and looked around. The spaceship had not survived the impact, because the flaming heaps around me looked suspiciously like burning garbage.

Crumple, crumple, whoosh, ding! Flaming duckheads! That was a promising start, but with all of the adventures I wanted them to have, it would have been more of a novel than a short story! Puke.

I leaned back in my chair, and started brainstorming once again. Maybe there could be an… YES! I should totally write my story about an airplane that crashes in some magic mountains! That would be so cool! It could start like…

One day my plane crashed. I hadn't even wanted to get on the airplane in the first place, but my parents had dragged me on, so we could go to some sort of distant family reunion in Texas. As far as I could tell, it would be a bunch of old people telling stories from the "good old days." Anyway, I was being bored and watching a bad airplane movie when the aisle lights started flashing on and off and those air masks started randomly dropping from the ceiling. I peeked out the window for a hot second, and it felt like we were just suspended mid-air. Well, that lasted one second ONLY. We started plummeting towards the mountains below at a speed that would have made the world's best roller coaster jealous. The next thing I remember I was still in my airplane seat (still strapped in) but somewhere in the middle of a jungle. Maybe the mountains?

Rotting pineapple! I just realized that this story will be way too much like the first one. If I want them to fight their way out of the mountains with a whole adventure sequence, it won't be a story, it will be a 500 page book. Ugh. I would never find a good story idea. I had signed up late, and it would take me years to come up with a decent idea, not a week. Suddenly my computer dinged. Ding! I groaned, and rolled my desk chair over to it so I could see what it wanted. I was surprised to see if it was a note from the library! I pulled up the email, and here's what it said:

Greetings young authors! We realized that you should know you only have 1412 words to write your story. Once you have exactly 1412 words down on your page the world ends. Good luck and work hard!

Sincerely, Your Local Library

Um... excuse me, did they just say that the world ends in 1412 words? They probably just meant the story ends in 1412 words. Well, just to be safe, maybe I should do 1411. Then I'll never get to exactly 1412 and nothing bad will happen! (Not that I thought anything bad would happen in the first place)

Okay back to brainstorming if I want a decent idea before dinner time. Maybe I could write the story about… hmm, my eyes rested on my Cello sitting in the corner of my room. Uncle Jeff had given it to me for my 11th birthday, but I have never learned how to play. What if the main character in my story could play a cello, and… maybe since I love magic, her music could be magical! It could have special powers that… that could hypnotize people! It could hypnotize people when they heard her music, and then depending on what note she played they would do different things! That would be so cool, Super creative, and the library would love it for sure! Now just to start it…

At the first couple of lessons I sucked at cello playing. I watched my teacher play, and she created smooth buttery sounds. I tried, and it sounded like nails on a chalkboard. But I wanted, almost needed to know how to make those beautiful sounds, so I kept trying. I practiced, and practiced, and practiced, and eventually I became better than my teacher. I got better and better and eventually I became the most talented 13-year-old cello player in the whole state! When I won that competition and got that title I was so excited! I jumped around my room squealing like a happy hamster! But then I sat down hard on my bed. I realized that the state title doesn't mean much when I could be the best in the world. I wanted to be the best cello-player known to mankind! So I sat down and started playing.

3 Months Later

" Wow!" Exclaimed Tanya, "You really are amazing! I know kids at school say you're good, but that was better than good! That was incredible! I have no idea how you just did that."

"Thanks!" I was thrilled that Tanya liked my music. She was my best friend, but I had never played in front of her. I was too nervous. I could play in front of judges and people I didn't know, but for some reason the people closest to me were the hardest to perform to.

"Again! Play again!" Tanya cried.

"Okay!" I said not minding at all. I played my favorite piece again, but midway through, I stopped dead. The lights in my room had started flashing. I could swear I heard screams somewhere. I was freaked out. My bow dropped to the floor and in a shaky voice I said,

"Tanya? Did you hear that?" I slowly looked up from my cello, which I had been clutching with white fists.

"Tanya?" I got out of my chair, and slowly turned in a big circle. Tanya was gone.

Crumple, crumple, whoosh ding! NoNoNoNoNo. This would never work. I have never, and will never, like horror stories. I can't even handle reading one! Much less writing one. My brain was tired, and there was no way I could change this story to be a fantasy, especially with the zombie-ified people that I was hoping she would hypnotize. This would never ever work.

I was sick and tired of trying to come up with a fantasy plot. I need to do something realistic. Also, my back was starting to hurt. I grabbed my notebook and hopped onto my bed. I closed my eyes, trying to think of the perfect story idea. I had a feeling this would be the one! I thought for a couple seconds, and then sighed. I've got nothing. Unless, wait, wait, PRESTO! My eyes shot open, and I flipped back through my notebook. Yes, yes, yes, YES! I had a ton of super fun story seeds, why don't I put them all together, and write a story about myself! A personal narrative! That would be amazing! I took a deep breath, wrung out my hands, and I realized that this is the 1412 word in my story.