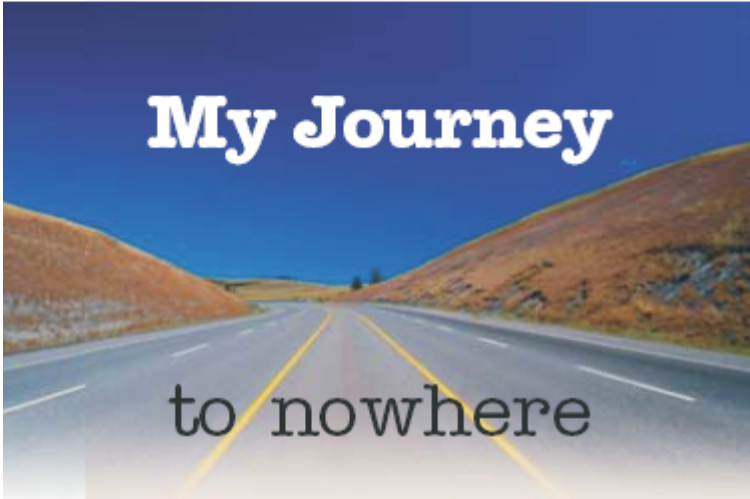




2009 Young Australian Writers' Awards
Helen Handbury Literary Award
 Awarded to
Juanita Marie Quinlan
 Mary McKillop Catholic Primary, Highfields, Qld.
 for
My Journey to Nowhere



Agony, hurt, lost, alone and afraid don't begin to describe what I feel. The pain is beyond anything, beyond everything.

I sink slowly to the ground. I wish there was someone here to look after me. To order me to stand up and keep walking. Someone I would have to pull myself together for. But there is no one.

I used to hate rules, people telling me what to do, how to eat, how to act, what to believe. Now I would give anything for it. To know what to do would be comforting. It would be easy, straightforward, no guess work involved. Never having to wonder if death would be coming to meet you at the next bend. Not like now. Now I don't know what I'm doing. I'm just muddling through and hoping for the best.

THE ROAD looks so long, but I can't be far now. For days I have slowly plodded along, alone and afraid. I don't really know where I am going but I will know the right place when I get there.

Layla, my teddy, is slumped pathetically in my hand. She looks like I feel. The sparkle is gone from her eyes now. They never used to be glassy and staring. They used to dance. It feels like long ago that we ran around the field, laughing and singing and dancing. It feels like I've forgotten how to laugh and dance, and if I ever sing again it would only be songs of pain and despair that would escape my lips.

I turned around a corner and looked at the next road I would have to conquer. It was long and winding with scraggly bushes down the sides. Like a snake. One that had been lying there for eternity because it has nothing and is nothing to anyone.

I let my shoulders slump and a single tear slides sorrowfully down my cheek. I have to give up. I've been walking for too long now. I wonder if there really is a happy place at the end of my road, and if there is, is it really worth this?

I ran out of food days ago and only have small amounts of water at a time for fear I would run out of that too. I am hungry and tired and just want to lie down and rest and never get up again.

Maybe, when I get to where I'm going, Mum and Dad will be there. Then they'll pull me into their arms and hold me tight and we'll all run through the fields and the sun will shine, really shine, enough to make the cold ball of fear and worry in my stomach go away. Maybe is enough. Who knows, maybe wherever I'm going is right around the next corner.

So I stand up and bravely place one foot forward and resume my journey. My journey to nowhere.



*By Juanita Marie Quinlan
 Age 12
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