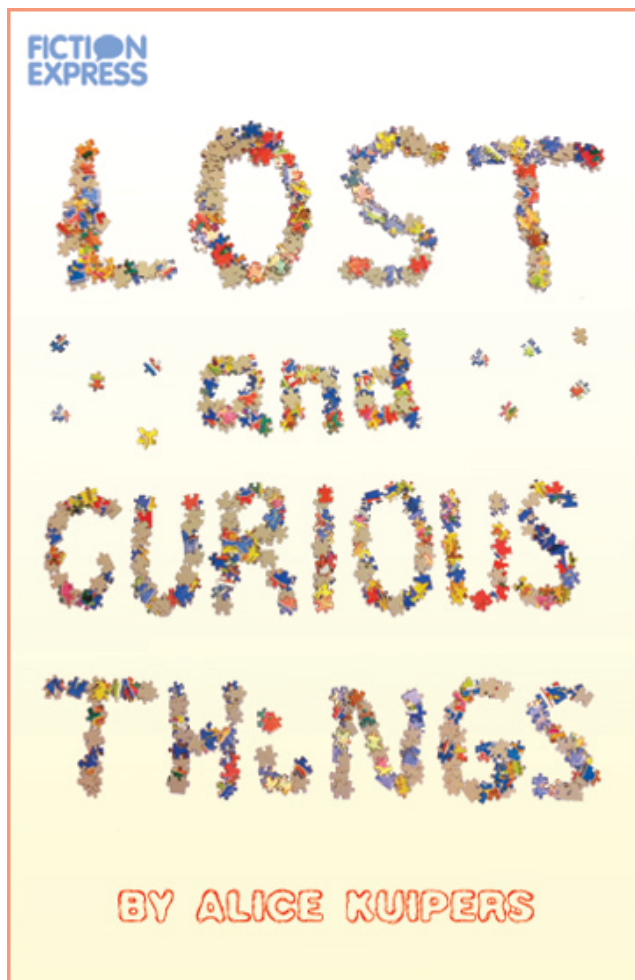


***Lost and Curious Things*** is our first ever interactive free verse story, and will be written by bestselling, Canada-based author Alice Kuipers.

To help teachers prepare for the launch of this story on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June, we have decided to release this sample draft of the first chapter (please note, this is not necessarily the final draft of the text).

The opening chapter will launch live on the website for students to read at 3 pm on Friday, and will be accompanied by a PDF of teacher resources as usual.



**CHAPTER ONE**  
**(SAMPLE FOR TEACHERS ONLY)**

“I’m going to kill you,”  
yells Fran,  
our foster mom.  
“Where’s it gone?”

I know what  
she’s looking  
for. A corner piece  
of the complicated puzzle  
she’s working on.  
Sounds dumb?  
Trust me.  
It’s a BIG deal  
to her.

Aaron and I  
tiptoe over  
the pile of clothes  
on the floor,  
slip out the door.

We've gone  
five blocks  
when Aaron  
takes the corner  
piece from his jacket  
pocket.  
"Oh no," he says,  
"How'd that  
get there?"

He holds it toward me.  
Right, like I'm gonna  
take it.  
Me: "Nuh, huh.  
No way.  
You stole it. You pay  
the price."

His face is hi-la-ri-ous.

I say, "She's gonna  
kill you."

He says, "Destiny?  
*You* took it?"

You took it and made it  
look  
like it was *me?*”  
He can probably tell  
from the way  
I’m smiling.

I say, “Come on, Aaron,  
lighten up.”  
He’s always so  
timid.  
Scared.  
Freaked out.  
Mind you,  
if my birth-mom was like his,  
well, I’d be  
messed up  
too.

I never met  
my birth-mom.  
She was looooong  
gone.  
Took one look at me, Dad said.

Fran is our  
(Foster-witch)  
*Mommy* now.

Mine  
and Aaron's  
and three other  
younger kids.

Fran. Freaky weirdo.

'kay. That's mean.

But she *is* weird.

Who spends all day doing puzzles?

Like, real puzzles, those pictures  
stuck on cardboard.

Fran.

Grouchy puzzle mom

with her man,

Dan.

Seriously.

Dan and Fran,

sit every day,

puzzling away.

Aaron holds out

the puzzle piece.

He looks like such

a little kid,

though we both stopped  
being little.  
Decided.  
Left it  
behind.  
Like, a *long* time ago.

I say, “kay, Aaron,  
don’t make me feel bad.”  
He begs,  
“Take it, then, Dest.”  
I take it and tell him:  
“I’ll put it back.  
Don’t worry.  
It was just a joke  
I’m sorry.”

And I am.  
Stupid puzzle piece.  
It really will  
make Fran mad.

There’s a whoosh.  
Like the wind.  
But it’s not a windy day.

**SAMPLE: Lost and Curious Things** by Alice Kuipers

I shiver in my T-shirt.

It's summer

no school – sweet.

School number eight for me

not that anyone cares

about that.

I don't care about that

because the puzzle piece

is tugged

from my hand

by the wind.

Blown

like a tiny

plastic bag.

I try to catch it.

It darts

out of reach.

I try to grab it.

It scoots further away.

“kay, not funny,” I say.

I swipe for it.

Aaron laughs.

*SMASH.*

I bang my head

on a door.

It wasn't there

before.

The door is *floating*

in the air.

Right

there.

“Uh,” Aaron says, “What’s that?”

The door shimmers

in the street,

suspended

like a dress

on a hanger.

It opens –

creeeeaaaak –

and the puzzle piece



slips through the gap.

Slam.

The door shuts again.

I have my hand

on the handle.

Aaron says, “Uh, Destiny,  
don’t do that.”

Course I’m gonna open it.

The best way

to hide that you’re scared  
is to jump right in.

“Come on, Aaron.

It’ll be fun.

Plus,

the puzzle piece  
is in there.”

He says, “I don’t

care.

Fran can just get mad.”

But she can’t.

Fran’s already told us

One more  
Speck  
Of trouble  
From me  
Or Aaron  
And she's done  
With us both.  
That wasn't the plan.

I say, "It was only  
a stupid joke."  
I planned to put the piece  
under the mat,  
find it later,  
just like that.

See, Aaron's my *only* family.  
We've had three  
homes together now.  
*Three.*  
There won't be four. They'll split us  
up  
for sure.

Besides, Aaron likes them,  
Fran and Dan.

So I can't mess  
it up for him.  
He  
wants to stay,  
play  
happy families.

I say, "We'll just get the puzzle piece,  
'kay?"  
I reach for the door  
turn the handle.  
A brass handle, like, really  
fancy.  
Turns  
easy.

The door opens.  
I step in  
and Aaron follows.

A sign says  
**WELCOME TO THE VAULT  
OF LOST AND CURIOUS THINGS**  
There's music.  
Someone  
sings.

**SAMPLE: Lost and Curious Things** by Alice Kuipers

I think about the mother  
I don't remember.  
Lullaby.

We're in a room,  
no,  
a chamber.  
Rich red  
walls  
hung with paintings  
higgledy  
piggledey  
like, *everywhere*,  
and that music  
keeps on playing.  
Aaron is pressed against me.  
"Gettoff," I say,  
but he doesn't move away.

"Don't be scared," I say.  
I step  
one more step  
into the room.

It's warm,  
smells of vanilla,  
cinnamon.  
Aaron says, "Destiny,  
come back."  
But I beckon him on.

"Look at this," I say.  
There's a sign  
on the wall.

**FOLLOW THE PATH  
THROUGH THE LOST AND CURIOUS THINGS  
TO FIND WHAT YOU SEEK.**

**GO LEFT  
HERE.**

**DO NOT  
TURN RIGHT!**

I don't like being told,  
never have  
never will.

Rebellious  
they say.  
Still.

The chamber  
branches,  
v-shaped,  
two paths,  
one choice.

The trail to the left is lit  
with tiny candles  
in china cups  
along the ground.

The ceiling is curved  
like a tunnel.

There are doors  
on each side  
hundreds  
thousands  
as far as I can see.

I swear,  
*swear*,  
that's my real mom singing.

I look to the other path  
on the right.

Secret, dark  
compelling as a good  
book.

There, like a butterfly  
the puzzle piece  
flies in the air.

As we watch  
it flickers  
like a candle flame  
on a birthday cake.

I can't decide.  
Follow the rules,  
or break 'em  
and get that piece.  
Go left  
go right  
or just get the heck  
out.

Aaron says, "What *is* this place?"  
I check his face.

He's frantic.

Makes me feel sick.

He says, "Destiny?"

What should we do?

I'm counting on you."

"Um, let me see."

Oh man – it's all up to me.

**What does Destiny decide to do?**

- **Turn left, following the instructions on the sign**
- **Turn right and try to get the puzzle piece**
- **Try to escape from The Vault of Lost and Curious Things**

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