PERFECTLY IMPERFECT STORIES

MAGIC CAT PUBLISHING

FRIDA KAHLO

"I never paint dreams or nightmares. I paint my own reality."

When Frida Kahlo felt unhappy, she loved nothing more than to pick up her paintbrush and create beautiful and detailed oil paintings in all kinds of bold colours.

Growing up in Mexico, she didn't have an easy start to life. When she was a young girl, she became very ill with a disease called polio that left her right leg thinner than her left, and made it difficult to walk. She worried about what other children would think about her appearance and struggled to feel happy with how she looked.

Frida struggled to feel happy with how she looked

Despite her insecurities, Frida managed to exercise a strong sense of individuality and unconformity throughout her life, refusing to shave her armpits, bushy unibrow or moustache. Instead, she put all of her thoughts into her colourful clothes, elaborate accessories and the fresh flowers she wore in her hair – all of which she often painted into her magnificent self-portraits.

When Frida was 18, another terrible thing happened to her: she was involved in a traffic accident that left her badly injured. Courageous Frida had once dreamed of studying medicine and becoming a doctor, but after the accident, the pain was so tremendous that she had spent months at a time lying in bed. It was during this time that she discovered painting pictures as a way to pass the time in her room; think of how boring it must have been in a time before TVs or iPads!

To her amazement, Frida found that she could take all the bad things that had happened to her – all the unhappiness and sorrow it brought – and create beautiful pieces of art with it.

Through the rest of her life, Frida faced many other hardships, including 35 different operations and a heartbreaking marriage, which led to minor and major depressive episodes that left her tearful and withdrawn. Even so, she always channeled her pain into her art, creating beautiful and surreal paintings that have made her one of the most celebrated women in art history today.

She channeled her pain into her beautiful art

CHARLES DARWIN

"Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving... directly follows.

There is grandeur in this view of life."

In 1831, a young man named Charles Darwin boarded a ship called HMS *Beagle* and sailed out on a death-defying adventure around the world to collect plant and animal specimens.

Although the five-year voyage took him to places as far flung as Sydney and Cape Town, it was in the tropical Galapagos Islands, a beautiful archipelago off the coast of Ecuador, that he made a remarkable discovery.

Darwin watched flocks of small birds called finches flitting around each of the islands, hunting for food. He noticed that each of the creatures had a different type of beak depending on where they lived.

Darwin secretly suffered severe bouts of panic

Darwin's curious mind figured out that all living things are competing to survive, and that those with the most helpful traits for their environment – like finches with small, thin beaks for pecking out nuts and seeds tend to survive best.

These living things then pass along their helpful traits to their young, explaining why plants and animals change over time.

Although Darwin was brave enough to journey to the ends of the earth for his work, he is said to have secretly suffered severe bouts of panic when he felt he couldn't breathe. His heart would race really fast and the feelings could become so upsetting that he felt like he might die, and couldn't help but cry or feel sick.

Darwin also suffered with something called 'agoraphobia', which meant that he felt afraid of being out in the open. Sometimes this could trigger a panic attack, but planting his feet on the sands of a new shore always made overcoming his fears worth it.

When Darwin first published his findings from his trip, they were extremely controversial, but today, his 'theory of evolution' is thought to be one of the most significant scientific discoveries ever made. You can visit a huge statue of him in the British Museum in London and his face is even printed on the English £10 note.