

NOTES

We, as a nation, are a country of survivors. We adapt and have the ability to overcome virtually every obstacle imaginable. In this timely narrative poem, told from the viewpoint of an actual Stormtrooper action-figure, poet Jake Barton tells the very real story of a young boy with special needs, who, together with his family, is simply trying to survive amidst the reality of a pandemic. This selection should be entered in Poetry Interpretation and may be performed by either a male or female performer. Because of the iconic nature of the narrator, it would be optimum for the performer to be as Stormtrooper-like as possible while performing this poem. Also, there are a few lines of dialogue spoken by the young boy, Peter. Peter is autistic; therefore, do the research needed to portray this character with the sensitivity and realism required to make the dialogue believable. The drama mask icons are simply visible to show the performer when to turn the pages in the manuscript.

A long time ago, in a city far, far away,
A young boy named Peter Calloway,
Celebrating his 5th birthday,
Received some very special gifts:
He received a pair of walkie-talkies,
A new set of *Paw Patrol* pajamas,
A set of six, new, shiny *Hot Wheels* cars...
And me: A Stormtrooper action-figure
From his favorite movie, *Star Wars*.

And though, of course, none of this is *law*.
I attest, as an oath, that everything I tell you
Is what I, Peter's Stormtrooper, saw.



Over the next few years,
Peter's life would undergo many changes.
His *Hot Wheels* were paraded,
And sometimes traded,
While others, were accidentally forgotten or lost.
And though the *Paw Patrol* pajamas were seldom *washed*,
Peter quickly outgrew such childish sleepwear,
But his parents didn't *dare* scold young Peter
For making such decisions on his own.
After all, now at seven-years-old, Peter was practically *grown*.

And what Mom doesn't think of her son as a Prince?
What Dad doesn't tease with a bit of affectionate sarcasm?

WHAT THE STORMTROOPER SAW

By Jake Barton

But, of course, all these things change
When your son is diagnosed with a mild form of *Autism*.



By age eight, the walkie-talkies met their fate.
They ceased to make sounds
When one walkie-talkie mysteriously walked away.
But that's all *okay*, because Peter,
Like most autistic children, prefers to play, excuse the pun—*Solo*.
And *oh-no*—Peter is not into role playing or taking turns,
Instead, he *yearns* for repetitive patterns.

On his front lawn, with me as his *pawn*,
Peter flaps his arms, flinging me far into the air.
Without a *care* in the world,
He screams, "JarJar Binks sucks!"
Then *ducks* for cover, as I return to the ground with a thud.
Still, other times, my white armor is covered with *mud*,
But that's all right, for Peter, this young *Jedi Knight*,
Along with his family, are about to face *Sith* forces
The likes of which, the world has never seen.
What *is* this Darth Vader-like enemy?
It's a virus—called COVID-19.



People cower in fear at the signs of exposure:
Fevers, chills, shortness of breath.
Could these be the early warning signs of *death*?
Congestion, headaches, a loss of taste or smell,
They would *tell us*: If you experience confusion, fatigue,
If your body or muscles *ache*; *take* precautions!
Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea; an inability to wake or *stay* awake,
Again, take precautions! Bluish face or lips?
These are the *tips* we were told: Be *bold*.
Seek emergency medical care immediately.



Our leaders sound the alarm.
Businesses close; masks are worn.
Rumors abound, and common sense is *drowned out*
By the media's mass hysteria.