

FIRST PRIZE

Lost and Found

You may think you are lost, weary traveller.
You are not.

Let me assure you, when your heart does not sing
And your blank stare wields nothing but hot, wet tears,
You are not yet lost, not until you have come here.

Here, where the soles of your feet burn on hot sand,
And the dry land bears evident scars of violent winds
Carving their signature into it.

Yes, here,
Where the air tastes of bleak resolve
And reeks of ancient, undisturbed resilience
Laced with intimidating stretches of landscapes.
A place doused only with the blaring sound of silence
And pure and unmoving
Emptiness.

Yet, amid the nothingness, there lies substance.
For instance, a tree stands dry and alone
But never lonely.
For instance, wispy clouds sing quietly
Of the lively buzz of unadulterated energy.
For instance, a place of nothing but not empty.

A place where infinite horizons
Coax your anxieties like lost wanderers into abyss
And amid the raw emptiness,
Without beginning or end,
It is here, where out of nothing,
You can find yourself again.

by Julia Cross (Grade Nine)
Mulgrave School
West Vancouver, British Columbia

FIRST PRIZE

How a Cardinal Stopped Winter

A wintry radiance bewitched the sky,
As snowflakes painted the wind dry,

And frozen rain fell silver from above.
On the lone tree shivered a mourning dove.

The storm raged, twisting weather to its will,
As winter held all, entranced and still.

Far from the whiteness and blinding snow,
A red, fiery blur set a branch aglow.

It searched for a song within its soul,
Until a melodic tune did roll,

And the sun fixed the Earth with a piercing stare.
As the cardinal's shrill filled the air,

It pushed the storm to its toes.
As the galaxy of snowflakes laboured and froze,

It stopped,

Then echoed again the cardinal's trill,
But now the storm was truly still.

by Incé Husain (Grade Ten)
Fredericton High School
Fredericton, New Brunswick

FIRST PRIZE

My Own Little World

As I sip from my juice box
On a boring old Monday afternoon,
I hear them,

The *clippity-clop* of unicorn hooves,
The flutter of fairy wings.

I race around the corner,
Squeezing my juice box so hard
That its contents spill onto the floor.

Mom scolds me,
Not believing in the world that is mine,
But seeing only the juice that stains the carpet.

If she had just let me go,
Maybe I would have seen them.

As I stand in the driveway
On a regular old Tuesday morning,
I see it.

The jagged scar on the car window
That must have been made by a ferocious dragon.

Dad ushers me into the car—I'm late for school.
He tells me to stop looking for that dragon,
I'm never going to find it.

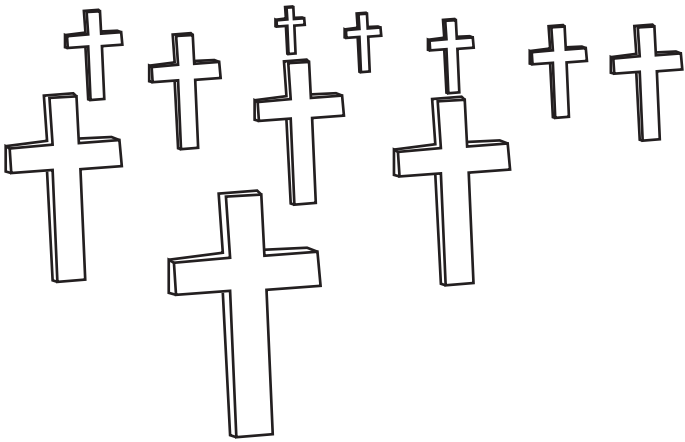
Fast forward to Friday afternoon:
My friends and I ride on the backs of majestic unicorns
And fly with radiant fairies.
The heat of dragon fire makes me tremble.

I fear that the dragon will find a chink in my armour,
But I know that there is no such thing.

It is only when I wander in my own little world
That I feel it,

That feeling of being completely and utterly
Myself,
No matter who tells me that my magical world isn't real.

by Katia Hughes (Grade Eleven)
Colonel Gray Senior High School
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island



FIRST PRIZE

His Daily Routine

He opens his eyes,
He lies in his bed.
Just another day,
He thinks in his head

He looks in the mirror,
Leans over the basin.
His hair is a mess,
His beard is unshaven.

He opens the door,
Smells the fresh air.
The neighbours, they watch,
But he does not care.

He walks to his car,
He knows where he's going.
He's been there before,
Where his tears started flowing.

He arrives at the place
To see his old friends.
He visits them weekdays
And even weekends.

They talk for a while,
Reminisce their war stories
Of when they were younger,
When they had more worries.

The man starts to cry,
He now has to go.
He says his goodbye
To the crosses in rows.

He remembers them daily,
Through the pain of his woes.
The war may be over,
But his pain still grows.

by Kale Upton (Grade Twelve)
Beechy School
Beechy, Saskatchewan

SECOND PRIZE

Should've Thought Twice

I was skating on the pond
Gliding on the thin ice
I knew I should've thought twice
Before going out to skate that day

Quite suddenly the ice began to crack beneath me
I lost balance and landed on one arm
Breaking more slivers through the ice
I knew I should've thought twice
Before going out to skate that day

I gasped as the ice gave way beneath me
Sending my weight into the freezing lake
I got dragged into the cold water underneath the ice
I knew I should've thought twice
Before going out to skate that day

The air seized in my lungs and began to burn
I stared endlessly at the frozen ice above
Not able to find an opening to get out of
I tried to swim with all of my might

But the whispers of waves held me tight
That pond was covered in ice
I knew I should've thought twice
Before going out to skate that day

I knew my time was running short
I closed my eyes and prayed
In that terrible situation under the ice
I knew I should've thought twice
Before going out to skate that day

When my body went numb
I knew I was done
I was lost under that ice
I knew I should've thought twice
Before going out to skate that day

by Abigail Caines (Grade Nine)
Corner Brook Intermediate School
Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador

SECOND PRIZE

Sideways Looks from Upside-down People

Crooked looks
From upside-down people
In sideways, slanted halls

Clinging desperately
To upside-down perspectives
It's a wonder they don't fall

Fighting backwards battles
Built with quicksand and with straw
Filled to overflowing
With jumbled-up opinions
Refusing to see flaw

Teetering on tipping scales
Unsteady and unsure
Tripping towards an ending
Faded and obscure

Wavering and wobbling
Feet walking on the sky
Head-standing on worn concrete roads
Step on clouds passing by

Directions blurring, shifting, churning
Can't tell up from down
Right from left and east from west
Only sane one in this town

Dizzy in their reeling minds
Spotlights in the floor
Footprints on the ceiling tiles
It's all too tangled to ignore

Right-side up in an upside-down world
What a twisted place to be

When the whole wide world is upside down
It all looks right-side up to me

by Isabella Crysler (Grade Ten)
Nepean High School
Ottawa, Ontario

SECOND PRIZE

Charon's Rivers

Charon's rivers are by my door tonight,
Filled with everyone's tears but mine.
In comes the boatman himself, not to take me,
But to offer a ride.
"She is gone; why do you remain?"
My heart
Screams
Angry words at me, repeating Charon's question.
"I don't know," is all I say.
But my heart tells me that
I am a monster,
Before leaving with Charon
And slamming the door.

I take water from my well, add salt,
Pour it in the river,
But it is too salty—or not salty enough:
The water is not natural and is
Quickly banished to the banks,
Abducted by the sun.
My heart returns, infuriated by my insincerity,
But Charon's shadow lingers on my faded, frayed "welcome" mat.
Sunlight comes, and the shadow is hard to see,
But I don't know
If it will ever leave.

by Anneka Spice (Grade Eleven)
South Kamloops Secondary School
Kamloops, British Columbia

SECOND PRIZE

Wishful Thinking

“When are you coming home, Grandpa?
I miss you.”
*I’ve moved on, my dear.
This is my home now.*

“I crouched on the creaky steps of the ice-cream shop,
waiting for you with mint chip running down my chin.”
*Did you order me a scoop of peanut butter?
You know it’s my favourite flavour.*
“I did, Grandpa,
but it melted before you got there. . . .”

“On our weekly Sunday night practices,
I wandered around the dusty ball diamonds for hours.
I had to start without you. . . .”
*Squirt, the important thing is,
did you hit the seams off the ball?*
“I didn’t know how, Grandpa.
The tee wasn’t a good teacher,
and the bat forgot how to swing.”

“I set up the card game on our rickety kitchen table,
but I had to play alone. . . .”
*You’ll need to find new hands to challenge,
without giving away our secrets.*

“I scanned the stands for you at my skating competition,
but you weren’t beside Grandma. . . .”
*I was watching from above.
You know I’ll always be your greatest admirer.*

“Can we have one more day together, Grandpa,
where we don’t just talk and talk?”
*We will, my sweet girl, we will.
The field is wide open.*

by Sarah Arnott (Grade Twelve)
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Killarney, Manitoba

THIRD PRIZE

There

I cannot
Begin to explain
How much I want you
Here,
But you are not
Here.
You're There,
And There does not know
How lucky it is.
There is not Here.

There cannot
Love you the way I do.
There does not
Know you the way I do.
There is not Here.

There will not look at you
Quite the same as I do.
There will not tell you
Everything's going to be okay.
There is not Here.

Oh, how I wish
I could be
There.
But There
Is not with me.
There is with
Her,
And I am not
Her.
I am not
Her.

by Kelti Spencer (Grade Nine)
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Edmonton, Alberta

THIRD PRIZE

Tagore's Poems

I grew up scribbling Chinese lyrics on my textbook,
adding limbs and wings to illustrated figures,
each stroke of my character resembling a tiny life-form
dancing at the tip of my childhood, oblivious of its fear of heights.
I spent a prolonged winter in my room,
writing poems for my favourite boy.
The following spring, I won a top literature prize as an eleven-year-old.
The Chinese teacher of the boy I adored asked me what book I was reading.
Truthfully, ever since he came into my life,
ruffled my thoughts, scattered my identities,
meanings escaped from words leaving rows of shells.
“Tagore’s poems,”
my feigned self wrapped around a trembling ego like a crunchy honey coat.
I wrote every single Chinese assignment for that boy,
left him with exquisite adjectives glimmering like souvenirs.
After we had broken up,
I moved across the Pacific Ocean,
picked up a new language,
found a shortcut to redemption,
and five years later, I am sitting in this dark cave of a room,
my lighthearted characters fallen off the edge of every textbook page,
looking irretrievably dead.
I have an imaginary cigarette in my mouth, a lighter that ignites on self-doubts,
a worn-out English dictionary at my side,
trying to untangle Tagore’s metaphors.

by Grace Liang (Grade Ten)
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Victoria, British Columbia

THIRD PRIZE

The Cathedral

My grandmother is a cathedral,
Not a scary Gothic one or a severe Victorian one,
This cathedral is inviting and comforting.
Even those who would never go to cathedrals come to this one.
It radiates warmth and compassion.
You come to it in happy times to rejoice
And in hard times to seek advice.

It is a cathedral built to survive in the desert.
It has a bright, colourful frontage
And a pearly white flight of stairs.

If you look at the cathedral longer,
You might see the complex stained-glass windows,
The delicate railing, and the rough foundations.
You can see these foundations are made of a less distinguished stone.
The cathedral stands tall on them, showing off its treasures.

You never need to scream in the cathedral to be heard,
Because it always knows what you need.
Wrapping you up in its rich incense,
It guides you through your reflections.

It could be raining or snowing,
Hailing or storming,
The cathedral is always there—sturdy, unchanged.
It always waits for you with open doors,
The way my grandmother does with open arms.

by Héloïse Véronneau (Grade Eleven)
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Montréal, Québec

THIRD PRIZE

From This, They Move On

Once all that could be said is spoken, and all that could be done is performed,
The every-man became too jittery to jump, jape, or dance,
Ghastly was the fact that everybody grew ignorant—
Ignorant to what their fragile, average bodies could achieve anymore.
They wanted out of this nation of horror, but what did they truly desire?
Universal laws and times seemed to be changing rapidly, yet no one thought adequately of it,
Or no one could tell—or perhaps, no one cared.

Not much longer afterwards, balbis and annulus shapes descended from the heavens,
Uncoloured in nature, absolutely charcoal to mankind's eye,
The callous vessels were elusive if gazed at directly, phantasmal, anemic,
The dark architecture above poisoned the clouds to a grey hue
And sung the people music—obnoxious, loud, horrible noises,
But the people, they were more-so worried when the constant droning static was adjourned.

Soon after, all foods tasted rotten upon the human tongue, only inedible items settled stomachs.
Cursed pallets placed in everyone's hungry gullets,
Even water was not impervious, that tonic of life, stuffed brutally into morose clouds,
Now lazily weeping viscous, slimy liquids down to Earth, blackened.
Yet it rained more often, as if the world itself were attempting to clean away its dregs and grime.

Vanity ceased, as on the third day, mirrors refrained from functioning,
Then, every shadow evaporated, the world still kept dark,
No one would even realize if the geometrical shapes crashed into the diseased ground,
Obliterating everyone, ending what they believe is life,
As no one bothered to foster a single care.

by Jake Danielsen (Grade Twelve)
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