

FIRST PRIZE

Cosmic Tales

Her pen scribbled across the intricate constellations within her mind,
Brimming with fanciful impressions and endless audacity;
In clouds of stardust, her thoughts collided,
Sparks scattering amid a halo of ethereal ideas.

Among star-spilled skies, she wrote vivid dreams,
Scrawling legends of irregular galaxies and distant illusions,
Her slender hands flitting across horizons,
Stellar winds stirring between the spaces of her words.

These words, like filaments of brightness suspended against gravity,
Created an aperture of untold stories
Waiting to be discovered.

With celestial ink embedded in her fingertips
And grandiose notions fizzing in her head,
She traced the cosmic string to the edge of the universe,
In search of a starry haven she could fill with her tales.

She yearned to share her stories, watching centuries pass by;
Clusters of stars growing and fading away
Until she, too, began feeling the ache in her bones
And the ink in her pen slowly dried away.

At last, when her calloused fingers could no longer write,
She set her stories free, her words drifting across time and space—
These delicate fragments of cosmic tales,
Forever wandering the ecliptic paths of the universe.

by Alison Wu (15 years)
Ottawa, Ontario

SECOND PRIZE

Something to Wait For

The path is littered with roots and dry leaves, yet I run.
I am careful not to trip and hurt myself,
But I am careless, and I fall—and I don't care.
I shiver with anticipation, turn the corner, and see the lake.
The water crashes over the smooth, hard stones.
I wonder if the stones might ache from being slapped so many times;
I giggle at the thought.
I stop and stand there, with the forest behind and the beach in front.
I am alone. I am alone, but not afraid.
The fresh Clear Lake air brushes my hair and washes my arms and legs.
My family is way back on the path;
They have probably barely left the car yet.
But I had run ahead, because this is the moment I crave—
At home, at school, everywhere . . . hopelessly—
This perfect moment, once a year.
I pull off my cover-up and toss it over my shoulder.
It rests on the bench; it can wait.
I walk until I reach the creaky, wooden dock.
It is too cold to swim, but I don't care.
Minnows swirl in their schools and paint the water silver.
Seagulls scream at me.
In that moment, I can fly.
I don't care that it's foolish or that the water is freezing,
I throw out my arms and run.
I run down the dock and the wind whistles its song in my ears.
I'm not sad or angry or happy.
I just believe,
And I jump,
And for a moment, I do fly.
I don't feel the water, and then I do.
There isn't ice, but there might as well be.
It is cold—cold as flames.
It takes my breath away, but I can still breathe.
The only thought in my head is, *I can't soar like a seagull*,
But it doesn't matter, because I can swim like a minnow.
So I'll just stick with swimming for now,
Right here in Deep Bay;
And perhaps, just perhaps,
One day I *will* fly.

But for now, I'll just wait . . .
And enjoy having something to wait for.

by Lily Hodgson (12 years)
Lac du Bonnet, Manitoba

THIRD PRIZE

caterpillar feet

and the
finitegardenfences
drag me down,

because everylittlepixie
moment
will
never be the
same.

more of the same,
we are stumbling through
hedgestacked
for our
feet

dirt
slips through the
cracks, between

our branches,
my nerves
kiss me and
something

kindles.

a terrible solitude
whispers through my
hedge-maze,
igniting caterpillars in my brain.

the creepycrawlies brush my
neurons with heaps of
never as they
wait for
my
stumbling.

i
am
tumbling

into your arms,
through the leaves,
stackedonstacked
in a lonely
corner,

and i've lived on my toes
in this search
for my feet.

feed me mazes,
touch me
always,
suddenly

my caterpillars are butterflies

by Ariel Tozman (14 years)
Toronto, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Dreams

I heard it all,
I felt it all,
I lived it all,
But I don't remember it at all.

I say I don't dream,
And they say everyone dreams.
Then why don't I remember?
Why don't I remember the adventures?
Or did I dream about a heartbreaking lie?

I beg of you,
Do not tell me
That everyone dreams,
Because that is not true.

Do not fill my head
With this logic nonsense;
I wish to be left alone
With my lies, my tricks, my deceit.

Tell me I dream,
And then I'll long to know,
Were my dreams so horrifying
That I decided to spare myself the scare?
Or were they magnificently perfect
So that I chose to forget,
To spare myself the disappointment
When I awaken?

I plead with you,
Do not tell me!
I prefer my sweet lies
Over the ghastly truth.

You have dreams,
But I
Do not.

by Humira Khajah (15 years)
Surrey, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Broadcast into Thin Air

Mike Alpha Yankee Delta Alpha Yankee
Mike Alpha Yankee Delta Alpha Yankee
Mike Alpha Yankee Delta Alpha Yankee
Delta Oscar Yankee Oscar Uniform Charlie Oscar Papa Yankee

[Silence]

India
Alpha Mike
Alpha Lima Oscar November Echo
Alpha Lima Whiskey Alpha Yankee Sienna Alpha Lima Oscar November Echo
Alpha Lima Whiskey Alpha Yankee Sienna
Whiskey Alpha India Tango India November Golf Foxtrot Oscar Romeo
Sienna Oscar Mike Echo Oscar November Echo Tango Oscar
Charlie Oscar Mike Echo Uniform Papa Tango Oscar Mike Echo
Alpha November Delta Romeo Echo Mike India November Delta Mike Echo
Tango Hotel Alpha Tango Tango Hotel Echo Romeo Echo Alpha Romeo Echo
Oscar Tango Hotel Echo Romeo Whiskey Oscar Romeo Delta Sienna
India November Tango Hotel Echo
Alpha Lima Papa Hotel Alpha Bravo Echo Tango
Bravo Uniform Tango Tango Hotel Echo Romeo Echo India Sienna
November Oscar Oscar November Echo
Tango Hotel Echo Romeo Echo India Sienna November Oscar
Sienna Oscar Mike Echo Oscar November Echo
Tango Hotel Echo Romeo Echo India Sienna Oscar November Lima Yankee
November Oscar Oscar November Echo
Alpha November Delta Sienna Oscar Mike Echo Tango India Mike Echo Sienna
India Tango India Sienna Sienna Oscar Hotel Alpha Romeo Delta
Tango Oscar Romeo Echo Mike Echo Mike Bravo Echo Romeo
Whiskey Hotel Yankee India Sienna Hotel Oscar Uniform Lima Delta
Sienna Tango Echo Papa Oscar Uniform Tango Oscar Foxtrot Mike Yankee
Sienna Oscar Lima India Tango Uniform Delta Echo
Whiskey Hotel Yankee India Sienna Hotel Oscar Uniform Lima Delta
Bravo Echo Lima India Echo Victor Echo India November
Sienna Oscar Mike Echo Tango Hotel India November Golf
Oscar Tango Hotel Echo Romeo Tango Hotel Alpha November
November Oscar Tango Hotel India November Golf
Whiskey Hotel Echo November Tango Hotel Echo Romeo Echo India Sienna
November Oscar Tango Hotel India November Golf Bravo Uniform Tango
Lima Oscar November Echo Lima India November Echo Sienna Sienna
Alpha Lima Oscar November Echo Alpha Mike India
Alpha Mike
Alpha Lima Oscar November Echo

[Silence]

Mike Alpha Yankee Delta Alpha Yankee
Mike Alpha Yankee Delta Alpha Yankee
Mike Alpha Yankee Delta Alpha Yankee
Delta Oscar Yankee Oscar Uniform Charlie Oscar Papa Yankee

by Linda Xia (15 years)
Surrey, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Emotions

A changing rainbow lives inside,
Taking turns in guiding;
Extremes, venture outside,
Extremes, crack in hiding.

Yellow prances through the core,
Bringing light to the two windows;
Never falling, never sore,
Never casting shadows.

Green lightly floats in the air,
Riddled with confusion;
Fear giving quite a scare,
Fear masking, casting illusion.

Red surges through the heart,
Sweet chocolates envelop;
One might call it art,
One might call it hope.

Blue settles in the depth,
Deep, deep down is where it lies;
Swallows urge to hold one's breath,
Swallows tears, smothers cries.

Black swirls hurricanes of thoughts,
Conflict and turmoil cackling through the skies;
Uncertainty bordering, tied up in knots,
Uncertainty paralyzes 'til finally dies.

White embraces tightly snug,
Radiates impressions of safety;
Comfort surging through the hug,
Comfort, relief in the sanctuary.

by Angela Chuang (14 years)
Richmond, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

A Long-lost Friend

The beach courses
Through my veins
Salt water taking place
Of blood
Sand baked into my toes

An everlasting horizon
Of miracles
Laps onto the seashore
Coaxing me to jump
Into its arms

And when I do
The ocean is not the ocean
And I am not me
Instead, we are one
Even as my lips turn purple and I
Give the water a wave farewell
And melt
 Into the sand

Whose heat caresses my flesh
As the ocean sings me a lullaby
And the buzz of activity around me fades
To a hum
Which slowly gives way to sleep
But only for a millisecond
Until my eyelids flutter open
And my body demands for more
In unison with my soul because

The beach will always course through my veins
And the sand tickling my toes
Is like meeting a long-lost friend

So after digging a canal across a sandbar
And twirling for joy in the ice-cold waves
I fall asleep in my sandy bed
Each night dreaming
Of when I'll go to the beach again

by Émilie Risdon (13 years)
Bathurst, New Brunswick

HONOURABLE MENTION

Staccato Bursts of a Summer Storm

I walked the dusty road alone,
Huge white clouds piled like pillow stuffing reached for the sun
Thinking of pizza when I get home.
Sharp sun, soft shadows . . .
Fields of green hay on either side;
Deep-green leaves flashing with silver flail madly with sudden gusts.
If I see a bear, I will hide.
Black begins to flood the sky, a dark bush is highlighted by bright-pink roses.
My steps on the road make no sound.
Summer thunder growling over the hills,
I still have time to look around.
Cloud to cloud, like fireworks, lightning flashes.
This summer is so dry and hot,
Rapid-fire thunder now like shots fired overhead:
So farmers wish for rain a lot.
Drop, spot, splat, just a shiver before the sky opens,
Still two kilometres to my door;
Puddling, pooling, playful droplets.
My feet are sore, but I have to walk some more.
A grey veil races forward,
I am almost home, but not quite yet;
Splashing a sudden summer shower.
I laugh, because I'm all wet.

by Dylan Radcliffe (12 years)
Fort St. John, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Fire

Fire, fire burning bright
Fire burning through the night
Burning, burning fiery hues
Golden, orange, red it brews
From golden-red
To a copper-black bed
Of coals that glows in the dark

by Sofia Morgan (10 years)
Dawson City, Yukon

HONOURABLE MENTION

Sea Journey

I swim through the sea
Grey dolphins squeal and play
Soft and rubbery beluga whales come up
blowing air out of their blowholes

Octopuses with eight arms covered in suction cups
move backwards through water using jet propulsion
Hammerhead sharks with wide-set eyes lurk and prey
Stingrays with wide, flat bodies camouflage themselves

Orange and white-striped clownfish
immune to shocking from floating anemone tentacles
hide in coral to protect themselves
Symbiotic relationship benefits both of them
warding off predators while searching for food

A clam opens and closes its shell showing a pearl inside
Seahorses, green with black polka dots, swim in pairs
with their tails linked together
Blue starfish with spiny skin wash up on the sandy shore

I find my way out of the wavy, warm sea and go home

by Joshua Doupe (9 years)
Belwood, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

If There Were No Aphids

If there were no aphids,
There would be no ladybugs.

And if there were no ladybugs,
There would be no trees.

And if there were no trees,
There would be no *me!*

by William Howes (8 years)
Chestermere, Alberta

HONOURABLE MENTION

Eagle Eyes

Once there was an eagle,
With his friend Salty the seagull.
They flew high in the sky,
Looking for pancakes and pie.
They thought it was yummy
As they gobbled it into their tummy,
And they went in search of some more.

by Hugo James (7 years)
Whistler, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Animals

The elephant is big and grey.
I like his trunk because it sprays.

The giraffe is very tall and free.
She eats leaves from the tree.

The crocodile is long and green . . .
The sharpest teeth you have ever seen.

The lion is very strong,
And his mane is very long.

by Mark Raspopov (5 years)
Toronto, Ontario

FIRST PRIZE

Desolation

There was a soft, blue light delicately caressing my face. Beneath me was an almost imperceptibly light, cottony substance I didn't care to name. I hardly seemed to be breathing, as though I had drifted away from my body. Wherever I was, there was no time, no purpose. I was destined to float here, blissfully oblivious, on the fringes of reality forever.

Then, I realized how cold I was.

I felt like a fish that had been swimming, carefree, in the ocean, when suddenly, I was yanked into the open air, where I couldn't adjust, couldn't breathe. After a blinding, confusing moment, however, everything shifted into focus, along with all the memories I thought I'd lost.

The cruel, pockmarked surface of the asteroid—so enormous I couldn't begin to determine its size—appeared at the spacecraft windows, choking the sky. The unavoidable collision was accompanied by a crash so deafening and thunderous, it felt as if the universe had come to an end. I heard Maya screaming frenziedly and our captain bellowing orders over the cacophony of crushing metal and pounding feet. There was the boundless terror of trying to grab something, anything, but instead free-falling towards the planet that grew larger by the second, as we careened uncontrollably towards it. Then, absolute blackness.

Terrorizing thoughts tore through my mind as rapid as our plummet through space. Without meaning to, I let out a ringing, despairing scream.

No one replied.

Taking a shuddering breath, I sat up, hearing snow crunch beneath me. I was surprised that I could move so easily. The only injuries I appeared to have suffered were aching joints and a throbbing headache. I quickly surmised that this was due to the fact that a massive plate of metal from the destroyed spaceship had lodged itself into the ground in front of me, deflecting any debris that might have soared my way.

Sure enough, peering out from under the warped, singed metal, I saw countless pieces of twisted remains scattered for miles around in every direction. Had the plate not landed where it did, I would have surely taken a chunk of the engine thruster to the head.

In the centre of the destruction was the gigantic, contorted carcass of the ship, lying on the snowy ground like a mangled corpse. Seeing how much damage had been done made my spirits sink about ten feet lower. I began to doubt my colleagues had been as lucky as I had. Realizing I might be the only one left, I felt hot tears sting my eyes.

No. I was not a crier. I would assess the situation before drawing any conclusions. Thus, I set my jaw and carefully, as though there were a chance it might collapse on me, inched my way out from beneath the sheet.

Standing up, I gazed about the landscape. As far as I could see, there stretched nothing but rolling dunes of hard-packed snow, glinting harshly in the odd blue half-light of a periwinkle sky. I shivered as a merciless, icy breeze swept by, easily penetrating my thin hoodie. I certainly hadn't prepared for a crash landing on a planet with an arctic landscape. Nonetheless, I thanked God I hadn't worn shorts.

Not spying another soul, I decided to investigate the other side of the ship. Pulling my hood over my short, dark hair, I cautiously crept around the wreckage.

Then, I saw the bodies. This was the most horrifying sight I'd ever seen, yet I couldn't look away. They lay roughly in a row, as though someone had half-heartedly attempted to organize things. There was our captain, a stern look frozen on his face, and our piloting crew. Some stared blankly up at the sky, while others lay face-down in the frigid snow. Their bodies all bore bloody gashes, oozing crimson onto the ground.

When I saw Maya, my best friend, tears gushed from me like a waterfall. Her eyes were glazed, staring at nothing. These people, whom I'd known and loved nearly all of my life, were

gone—every one of them. If planets were flat just as people once believed, I would without hesitation walk right off the edge of this one, so I could keep falling and falling forever.

“*Aaagh!*” I tipped my head back and howled desolately at the sky, not caring who heard me. There was nobody to hear me anyway.

by Paige Henry (12 years)
Shawnigan Lake, British Columbia

SECOND PRIZE

Waves of Simplicity

“The world is moving too fast!” She ran to her house, fumbled with her keys to unlock the door, and slammed it shut. She collapsed to the ground and hugged her knees tight to her chest. She mumbled into her wrinkled shirt, “I wish I could press a pause button so everything could just stop and I could just breathe—just think.” This fast-moving generation was too much for her brain to take in. She thought of cars, industries, gases, pollution, global warming. “The world is slowly getting destroyed. And I will do something about it.”

A few months later, Brian was talking with his co-worker, Ketly. “And when I added sulphur to the solution, it b . . . it b . . .” He looked at Ketly, confused. “Sorry, I forgot the . . . the . . .”

“The word?” Ketly suggested.

“Yeah. That’s strange. I even forgot the word ‘word.’”

“Hi?” Their boss, M. Laghnit, dressed in his usual white lab coat appeared with a stack of papers. “I’m sorry. I’ve got a blank. I can’t . . . remember your names.”

“Ketly, Doctor. And Brian,” Ketly reminded the older man.

“So I’ve. . . .” The scientist stared blankly at them.

“Doctor? Are you okay?” Brian asked, concerned.

M. Laghnit looked expressionlessly at them for one more heartbeat, then straightened. “I feel like words are slipping away from me. We’ll finish this tomorrow. I’m going to go rest in my office.” Ketly and Brian watched as their boss walked away. Then they headed through the offices where some colleagues were working on computers; however, half of their co-workers simply stared indifferently at the screens. Some scratched their heads, baffled, digging through their brains for the word that might complete the unfinished phrase.

“Hey, Ketly? What’s that liquid substance that every living creature needs to survive?”

Ketly’s eyes widened when she heard the question. They widened even more when she saw how Brian looked: as if he were solving the world’s hardest math problem, with his squinted eyes and fingers stroking his chin.

“You mean water?” she said incredulously.

Brian pulled her aside. “Something strange is going on. It seems as if we all have temporary amnesia.”

She nodded. “Why haven’t I forgotten anything?”

Later that day, it was decided that the scientists needed to analyze this sudden memory loss.

A week later, Ketly entered Brian’s office, who was in charge of the operation. “Ketly, I figured it out,” he said, out of breath. The memory loss had gotten worse in the past week and now it was a battle just to pronounce basic words and remember how to do certain tasks. Brian pointed to a pair of headsets. “Block waves that cause forgetting.” He put the headset on and gave Ketly a remote with a single blue button. “Press to activate.” When she stood looking at the remote for a few minutes, Brian cried desperately, “Please press. Before I forget what it’s for.”

Ketly took a step forward, the button clutched tightly in her hand. She didn’t press it. “You’re smart, Brian. You found a solution to stop these dangerous waves from entering our brains and causing damage so we have time to stop the waves altogether.”

Brian tried to grab the remote from her hand, but she pulled back. “Press! I understand better if you press!” Ketly had a sly smile on her face. Brian shivered. Something wasn’t right.

“Two things you’ve overlooked, Brian. First, the source of these waves; they’re everywhere, but they must be emanating from someone somewhere. Second, your partner; why am I the only one who can sing the complete alphabet song?” She shook. “This is happening for a reason, and maybe I don’t want it to stop.” The remote clattered to the ground. She crushed it with her foot.

Helpless, Brian couldn’t understand why Ketly wanted the world to forget. He looked up and noticed tiny earphones in his partner’s ears. He knew they were used for listening to music,

but a lingering thought in the back of his mind made him believe they were used for something more important. He couldn't remember.

"I'm sorry," Ketly murmured. "But humans are destroying Earth. What better way to slow the commotion than to bring everyone's brains to caveman level? People will forget how to over-consume and only remember to survive." She grabbed a device from her pocket and turned the knob, increasing the wave frequency. "Once the waves reach the other side of the world, Earth will be saved!"

by Amelia Cocullo (14 years)
Pierrefonds, Québec

THIRD PRIZE

The Recycling Truck

As soon as the school bus rolls to a stop, I am already out the door and bounding towards home. At my front door, I pause to check the time before I step inside—leaving the sticky, humid air of the hot summer behind.

I throw open the toy trunk and pull out all of my toys, spilling them in a messy heap on the floor. *What should I play with first?* My mind scans the colourful pieces in front of me, as my hands start moving on their own towards the toys—tugging on new clothes on my dolls, brushing their hair, or arranging a dollhouse. I note that there are more broken toys since the last time I have played like this.

From the top drawer of the bookshelf, I carefully pull out the Barbie doll that has sat there alone in its original packaging since my birthday. Now, in privacy, it is finally safe to open it. Suddenly, the familiar sound of keys jingling in the doorway stops me cold. He is home.

“Eagan! You have to collect the recycling,” Mom calls, coming into the living room. Noticing the mess of toys on the floor, she rolls her eyes. “Are you still playing with toys, Eagan? What about chores? Homework?”

“I was about to do that,” I lie. Thankfully, the phone rings and my mom leaves to answer it.

“What’s that? Give it to me,” my younger brother demands, referring to the doll.

“No,” I reply as I begin to gather the broken toys in the recycling.

“Give it to me!” he whines.

“No!” I shout.

“Eagan! I’m on the phone!” my mom warns, stomping back into the room.

“But, he took my doll—” I try to protest.

“Can’t you get along with your brother for once, Eagan? He is only five, for crying out loud!”

I want to tell her how unfair this is, but the baleful look she gives me tells me that I don’t have the time or permission to argue my point.

“Fine!” At that, he stops crying at once. *That rascal! He knows exactly how to get what he wants.* But of course, I can’t cry if I want something. No one would come. My mom, being a single mother, already has too much on her mind. I stopped being her child the moment he came along. My younger brother, on the other hand, gets everything he wants by just crying for it.

I never even got to take the doll out of the package. In anger, I hurl the bag of broken toys straight inside the open mouth of the recycling truck, so the contents spill out.

“Wha—? Why are there toys there?” my brother cries, suddenly materializing beside me on the street.

“Don’t be stupid. This is where all the useless things go,” I snap. “In fact, you should probably get on too.”

“Why? Will there be more toys there?” he asks in wonderment.

“Where this truck goes, there’s *a lot*,” I say, enjoying his naivety. “Well, I have chores to do.” I leave him alone, staring at the truck in contemplation.

A few hours later, my mother rushes into the room. “Eagan! Have you seen your brother?” she cries, panicked.

“No, why?”

“Since coming home, he is nowhere to be found!”

The image of the recycling truck earlier, suddenly comes to my mind. *No, surely he isn’t stupid enough to make that dumb mistake!* “Maybe he is playing in the neighbourhood?” I suggest.

“I’m heading out,” she announces.

I had always watched from afar, as he played with my toys. Now, I can play freely! I think to myself. So, I start to play. But halfway through, it suddenly begins to feel mundane and

uninteresting. I catch my mind recalling the laughter in the halls, the tiny stomping of feet in the early morning, and that annoying voice—always whining about something. Strangely, the house feels empty without it. And so does my desire to play.

My mother bursts through the doors as tears roll down my cheeks.

“Sorry! I don’t want to lose my younger brother!” I cry to her.

To my surprise, Mother rushes beside me and takes me in her arms. “He’s your younger brother, but I haven’t forgotten that you are my first daughter. Now, let’s go find your brother,” she says, lifting me up from the floor.

“Okay,” I say, taking her hand.

by Jannat Bano (10 years)

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

HONOURABLE MENTION

Complementary Colours

"Indigo, your siblings told me you didn't fulfil your duties today." Drawn as it was with anger and disappointment, you would've hardly recognized my mother's usually heavenly face.

I was there, just like always! I wanted to scream out. Instead, I bit my tongue, holding back tears. Mother doesn't like to see us cry; she says it's self-indulgent. "I'm sorry." Pale and trembling, I forced out a meek, apologetic whisper.

Sighing, my mother dismissed me with merely a flick of her hand. "Very well, run along, child. And please try to do better next time."

"Yes, ma'am." Slipping from my mother's chambers and into the sunlit garden, I couldn't help shedding three solitary tears. Watching them fall, I knew she was right; each and every one of my brothers and sisters could be seen, but I was invisible unless one knew exactly where to look.

It had been this way since before I was born, you see. My mother, Iris, had three lovely triplets: Red, who changed her name to Rouge because "French sounded far more elegant"; Yellow, who loved to make people smile; and Blue, who was calm and thoughtful. Not long after, she had three more children: Orange, Green, and Violet. Finally, she had me. Some people might say I was a mistake, an accident, a surprise. Whatever my mother had intended, I knew I didn't belong. As well as being the only non-triplet, I was the smallest.

For the first few years, I didn't really even have a name; I was just "The Runt." One evening, my mother was lining us up for a lecture, and she shoved me between Blue and Violet. "In-ya-go!" The name stuck and, thus, I was christened.

Tragic as the origin of my name was, it was almost pleasant when compared with the many hours I sat alone. My brothers and sisters would pair up, leaving me the odd one out. Red and Green were sophisticated, enjoying art and gardens. Spontaneous and rebellious, Orange was perfectly matched by Blue, who was level-headed and calm. Humorous and energetic, Yellow and Violet were almost always in the mood for a boisterous laugh. If they tired of their companion, which was seldom, they happily returned to their triplet.

To be honest, they didn't mean to be unkind; I just didn't fit in. They were all unique and stood out in their own quirky way. My timid personality, however, preferred to hide in the trees and flowers of my mother's garden, basking in the warm, friendly sunshine; drinking in the heady sweetness of a thousand fragrant blossoms; finding solace in the jet-black ink of books.

One particularly lonely day, Violet accosted me, "We have visitors!" Her eyes sparkled with anticipation.

Dumbfounded, I watched my sister prance away. *We never have visitors!* Part of me wanted to shrink away, but my curiosity trumped my fear. Cautious, minuscule steps carried me inside. Terrified, I hid behind my mother. Furtive glances revealed a couple with five children.

To my horror, the adults and older children headed into the living room, leaving me rooted to the spot, staring at a strange boy as he fumbled to take off his boots. When he stood up, he looked as anxious as me. "He-hello," he stammered, extending his hand timidly.

Wide-eyed, I gawked at his hand. "Hi," I squeaked, so surprised to hear myself talking that I forgot about the hand. As he lowered it, I forced myself to lift my eyes from the floor.

Before me stood a lean boy, around my age. His tan, skinny jeans, redbrick V-neck, and leather armband accented his honey-brown eyes and tousled coppery hair. Suddenly, I felt self-conscious of my rumpled dress and twig-filled braids.

"What's your name?"

"Indigo." He smelled like tree sap and rain. "What's yours?" I couldn't believe I was actually talking to someone, much less a strange boy!

"Amber." His eyes dropped.

"Amber. . . ." The name tasted good as it rolled off my tongue. "I like it."

"Thanks." Uncomfortable, he shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

“Would you like to see the gardens?”

Grateful, he nodded, following closely as I wound my way around my beloved, familiar flowers. A little bench under an old oak offered a perfect resting place, where we exchanged stories and smiles. In such a way, one of my loneliest days became one of my loveliest, thanks to Amber. Together, we coloured our lives with laughter, with happiness, and most of all, with friendship.

by Maddison Conway (15 years)

Courtenay, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

We All Bleed Red

“Whites Only.” My jaw clenched involuntarily as I stared unblinkingly at the words. A blatant symbol of the unwavering segregation that reigned supreme in North Carolina. I turned angrily to the south. Endless fields of tobacco swayed gently, all keeping time with the field songs of the black workers. In the distance, the brassy wail of an out-of-town jazz band cut through the soft night air. “The devil’s music,” my father called it.

I continued down the street, patent-leather Oxfords kicking resentfully at pebbles in my path. Several days ago, I had been found conversing with the son of one of our servants. His voice, laced with rage, rushed into my mind: “*You’re white, Kendall—and a Lawrence. It’s not proper for you to treat the servants so. They may seem intelligent, but they’re still coloured.*”

“Why does it matter?” I wanted to hurl in his face. Titus embodied an authenticity and frankness sorely lacking in the usual boys I associated with. Anger enveloped me in a swirling black cloud as I stopped before the only home I had ever known. Colossal white pillars rose from the spacious front porch, giving it the look of an impenetrable fortress. The entire estate sagged with arrogant wealth, coated in white. How different was this place from the black homes I had seen! Many barely had a roof over their heads, yet their homes ached with the careless rhythm and colour found only in the black soul.

A feeble moan, drenched with pain, stopped me in my tracks. Retracing my steps, I stopped alongside an alley. It was there that I found him. “Father!” Agony, pure and unadulterated, seized my heart in a mighty hand. A dark pool of blood had already formed around his midsection, his all-white business suit stained irrevocably crimson. His strong and handsome figure now lay crumpled on the cold ground. Overhead, a cloud stole the last of the dwindling twilight. Hearing an ambulance, my body leaped into action. Desperately, I ran towards the vehicle, but it would not stop. As it roared away, my mind numbly registered the words on the back: “Coloured Only.”

“Help!” I shouted, my voice cracking with urgency.

Moses, Titus’s father, came running, dark face creased in worry. Hurriedly, I dispatched him for the town physician. A small crowd began to congregate, unable to restrain its curiosity. I spread my arms protectively over the still form, my tailored jacket now stained that same irrevocable crimson. *If—when, I forced myself to think, he recovers, he will not be pleased to know that people had been gawking at him from a street corner—*

“Back, all of you!” The doctor’s sharp tone tore into my thoughts. His face was tense as he quietly analyzed the situation, feeling my father’s pulse for any sign of life. Skilfully bandaging the wound, he turned to me, startlingly familiar eyes locked on mine. “You’re a man now, Kendall, and you deserve to know the truth. Whoever knifed him meant business. Even if the ambulance gets here, the hospital doesn’t have enough blood of his type.” He paused, his eyes brown wells of compassion. “I’m sorry.”

An image, buried in the sands of time, slowly floated into my mind. *A woman lay motionless on her sickbed, youthful beauty and sparkling brown eyes replaced by the age that comes with death. Pneumonia, they had said. Three years ago today.*

Tears blurred my vision as I looked down at my father. I turned to the doctor as a sudden flash of inspiration hit me. “What about the coloured hospital? I’m sure they would have enough. Very few people in Morgan have such a rare blood type.”

The doctor frowned, but before he could respond, my father moved slightly. “Kendall,” his voice grated. He coughed, bringing up a stream of bold scarlet.

“Father, I’m here. You’re going to be all right. The ambulance will be here soon.” I filled the empty air with a string of meaningless words.

“No . . . no coloured blood.” His eyes were vacant, staring at something I could not see. Suddenly, his body went limp.

It has been twenty years since that day, but in my mind's eye, I can still see him, lying in that alley, lifeblood coursing from his wound. And I think how even death's cold grip could not convince him to recognize the truth: We all bleed red.

by Lydia Goodbrand (15 years)
Youngstown, Alberta

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Second Kitten

I slowly opened my eyes. I was almost blinded by the sunlight that came through the window of my bedroom and travelled right into my exposed retina. I closed my eyes again. It was Saturday, so I could sleep in for as long as I wanted. I dozed off into a light sleep.

Even though it didn't seem as if I had slept very long, I woke up, and saw it was two in the afternoon. I thought that was weird. *Why didn't Mom wake me up?* Even if it's accidentally, Mom seemed to always wake me up on the weekends—my alarm clock did that job for me on weekdays. My mom vacuums, yells at my dad, and plays her eighties' pop cassettes most mornings—loudly. Then I realized something: *Mom told me last night that she and Dad were driving a few hours north to visit my aunt!* I had opted out; visiting relatives wasn't really my cup of tea; neither were long car rides.

I was still tired, probably because I didn't get to bed until four a.m. because of homework. High-school homework sucks. Mr. Anderson's essays were hard. He wanted 1,500 words—way too many. I closed my heavy eyelids and dozed off again.

I felt a nudging, a pushing—not an aggressive one, but I felt it. That's what woke me up. It was five p.m. I looked up and saw something nudging my leg. It was moving under my covers. I thought it was our kitten, Ringo. He was born three months ago. He kept gently rubbing up against me. I couldn't believe how long I'd slept—far too long. I decided to get up.

I sat up, and then I felt a sharp jab in my leg. "Ringo!" I shouted. "Don't bite me!" My eyes closed in pain. When I opened them again, I could not find the small, moving lump that I thought must be my kitten. I turned the sheets over; no sign of him. "Ringo," I called out. No sound of the soft pitter-patter of Ringo galloping across the hardwood floor.

In my window, I saw the family mini-van pull up into our driveway and knew my parents were back. In a few moments, I heard my parents come in through the door. "Shane, we're home!" my dad called out.

I finally got out of bed, went to the bathroom (my bladder had been really hurting), and walked down the stairs in my underwear, which I always wore as my "nighttime clothes."

I saw my mom holding a large, plastic case with holes in it. I instantly recognized it as the carrier used to transport Ringo around. "What's that doing here?" I asked.

"Didn't you read my note?" my mother asked.

"No," I said. I was really confused. *Why does she have that case? The cat was upstairs in my sheets a few minutes ago!*

"I wrote that your aunt really wanted to see our new kitten, so we took him along," she said.

"Aunt Sue loved him!" exclaimed my dad.

My mom opened the cage and little Ringo jumped out. "How does it feel to be back home? You've been gone for eight hours!"

This last line really stuck with me. *If my kitten had been gone all day, what on God's green earth had been crawling under my sheets and biting me?*

I looked down at my leg. The spot where I thought my kitten had bitten me was trickling blood. My mom noticed it clearly too. "Ohh! That's a nasty cut! How did you get that?"

How do I answer that? "I-I don't know." I felt very weird. I felt deeply afraid—far too afraid to sleep at all, never mind in *that* bed.

For two nights straight after that, I got zero sleep. After those two sleepless nights, I resorted to sleeping on the couch in the living room permanently.

Was I just crazy? No, because I had the terrible cut on my leg to prove it. I know my story has left far more questions than answers, and I apologize. To this day, I have no idea what was under my sheets, and that may be for the best.

by Scott Gemmell (15 years)
St. Catharines, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Bloody Ice

In the cold of December, when the land is white with snow, my children's children go to play on Bloody Ice. Its incarnadined surface is a source of mystery, another one of our town's curiosities. Sixty years ago—but how my memory dims!—I saw the red take hold. I saw wicked things rising from the lake, and when they left, they took my brother with them.

My brother was born a silent thing in the midst of a harsh winter. At four years old, I was struck dumb by his beauty; he had wide, pale eyes and lips that made me understand the meaning of rosebud. I envied him, knowing he'd be loved more than me. I should've known that darker things, too, would desire him.

I cared for him after our mother froze in her bed. I rolled her into the lake and told him she'd left instead. When the snows took our father, I buried him myself, though at that point, my brother was too old for lies. I was never able to marry because of him. At eighteen, I cared for him and let my sweetheart's letters go unanswered.

In the late winter months, my brother left one day and came home hours later, tracking snow into our house, twitches soon turning to shivers that racked his entire body. I combed the ice from his hair, and he seemed to return to life, colour seeping back into his fine features, and he said he saw our mother.

My hands shook, and perhaps he sensed my doubt, for he craned his neck to look at me. His words would linger for as long as I lived: "She's in the lake."

That incident was the first of many, and I was helpless to stop him when he left for longer, more often, returning with eyes glassy and a coldness that refused to thaw. In the nights, I heard him whispering to himself, and I know now that the shadows crowding ever closer, darker, like forms curled against his body, were not merely imagined. But I was young then, I did not know how to protect him.

And my memory leaves me; it unravels and falls away, but still, I can see the night I followed him out of the house, across the wintry plains, the cold biting like blades, and the flakes of snow turned blindingly harsh. In the greyish dark, I followed my brother to the lake, stiff with ice, my breaths smoke-thick and his invisible.

He shed first his gloves, then his scarf, boots, and scarlet cloak, until in tunic and trousers, he walked barefoot across the ice. Turning, he saw me, called out to me crouching by the shore, but my lips were frozen together, and I said nothing, did nothing.

It was then that I saw it, the night gathering onto the lake, darkness taking form, ice twisting 'round it. The thing—the human-shaped thing—there shifted and shuddered, put its pale hands on my brother, whose face I could see somehow with stark clarity and can recall now in my mind's eye. I've long forgotten the colour of his eyes, the sound of his laugh, but I know this: he was smiling, a twisted smile that did not suit him.

My heart sank when it kissed him, and so did he, straight into the lake, the ice giving way beneath his feet; though, he did not know it, until he tried to breathe, eyes flicking open in alarm. But the water had already reached his lips.

Was I relieved that he was dead? Did I feel guilty because I didn't save him? I stood staring across Bloody Ice, and perhaps it was wicked, but I told no one and was married to my sweetheart in a fortnight beside Bloody Ice. I was beautiful then, hair unbound and cheeks rosy in the cold. Gazing at blurry photographs, my children would sometimes ask why I did not smile or why my face was perpetually turned towards the lake's faded red.

His screams still haunt me when I sleep, when I look out across the lake. They echoed beneath the ice, which took on a reddish hue, spreading from where it closed over his head. Silence reigned when the lake was no longer white; my ragged breaths went quiet and my tears froze where they fell, for where my brother once was, there was nothing but bloody ice.

by Mika Goli (14 years)
Coquitlam, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

An Afternoon of Imagination

I peer through the sheets of pouring rain and stride vigilantly into the void of blackness. I flick on my flashlight; it illuminates the murky alleyway that is seemingly abandoned, but I know better. Cautiously, I dart the incandescent beam into every potential hiding spot, hoping to expose the obscured villain.

A dark figure materializes out of the shadows of an overflowing dumpster. The beam of my flashlight spotlights him instantaneously, a wicked mastermind with a black mask concealing his face. In his gloved hand, he clutches a colossal bag occupied with loot—stolen loot. The man tears his mask away, revealing a scornful expression. His catty, emerald-green eyes lock into mine—the eyes of the man I’d been trying to capture for nearly five months to fulfil the mission the chief detective had assigned me. Tonight, I would.

“Detective Walters, so we meet again,” he sneers in his untraceable accent that is a cross of over-exaggerated Transylvanian and French. He twirls his snaky, grey moustache around his long, slender fingers, as if he has the entire night to do whatever he pleases.

“Unfortunately,” I mutter through gritted teeth, and he emits a sinister cackle. I narrow my eyes to slits. “You will not get away with this, Dr. Ronaldo.”

“Oh, will I not?” he sneers mockingly. “Did I not get away with robbing that prestigious museum just two weeks ago in Italy and pocketing the Mona Lisa last summer from the Louvre, even with all the high-tech security? Not to mention the priceless gowns in Paris?”

Anger overflows inside of me as Dr. Ronaldo lists his malevolent achievements. Regrettably, my resentment is to my disadvantage, as I am not prepared for his impulsive escape.

Dr. Ronaldo tosses the loot bag high into the air, and as it sails over my head, he initiates his infamous getaway—a complex routine of front handsprings, cartwheels, and backflips, and an aerial for the grand finale. He swiftly executes a front flip, seizing the bag as it is still airborne, and lands elegantly on the concrete ground as silent and swift as a cat.

Reality sinks in as Dr. Ronaldo makes a beeline for the entrance to the alleyway. Desperately, I scrounge up a heavy span of rope from a nearby trash can, and it serves as my provisional lasso. Predictably, the weapon coils around Dr. Ronaldo, triggering him to trip over his feet and collapse onto the durable ground. Lassoing is my speciality, and I’m quite proud of it. My years of Western riding are evident in my detective duties.

I promenade over to Dr. Ronaldo, constricting the rope. Raindrops trickle down my shivering body, and a strong gust of wind blows in from the south.

“You cannot claim victory over me yet, Detective Walters!” Dr. Ronaldo proclaims defiantly, laboriously liberating himself from the loop, despite my attempt to delay him. His black hair teeters threateningly on the side of his head and his moustache twitches and goes lopsided, as he draws a shiny gun from his pocket. Restraining me down with his exclusive leather shoes, Dr. Ronaldo presses the pistol against my skull. The icy, rigid metal sends a startling chill through my body. “This is the end of Detective Walters!” Dr. Ronaldo declares maliciously, emanating a rehearsed evil cackle.

Before he can finish my life with the perilous gun, the lights suddenly flicker on, and Mom appears in the basement doorway. “Sorry to bother you, girls, but, Rue, your mother is here to take you to gymnastics,” she says, eyeing our costumes with a bewildered expression. It must be a peculiar sight, with me lying on the floor in the trench coat Dad bought me last Halloween and Rue hunkered on top of me, aiming a plastic water gun at my forehead.

“Great, we were just getting to the good part,” Rue grumbles, releasing the gun and yanking off her crooked moustache. “I’m coming, Mrs. Walters.” She wrenches the black wig off her head, and her blonde curls cascade down her back.

As we trail Mom upstairs, I shrug off my trench coat, switch off the fan, and pitch my flashlight into the hall closet. I pull off my plaid detective cap and my thick, black ponytail tumbles out. Rue’s mother, Mrs. Ronaldo, is waiting in the living room.

We exchange goodbyes, and as they stride out onto the front porch, Rue flashes me a sinister smile and whispers in Dr. Ronaldo’s infamous accent, “We shall continue tomorrow, Detective Walters.”

by *Kaitlyn Matthews* (14 years)
Regina, Saskatchewan

HONOURABLE MENTION

Hide-a-Way

Thump-thump, thump-thump, thump-thump. . . . came the sound, steady as a heartbeat, echoing through the forest. With each powerful hit of the hammer, Honey could feel herself getting stronger, coming together. Finally, the beating stopped, and Honey was able to clear her head and become conscious of her surroundings for the first time. A softly lit forest came into view, a brilliant green in every direction. With a start, she noticed a small boy with messy, brown hair and light eyes staring at her with the wonder and excitement that can only be found in a child. Next to him stood a tall man with wide shoulders, and the same bright eyes as the boy, looking at Honey with pride in his eyes.

“There, ready to go.”

Time and life went on, and Honey continued with it. Her simple wooden structure was made from leftover wood from the roof, held together with rusty nails and love. She was more than a tree house. She was a pirate ship, a school house, a secret-agent hideaway.

For ten golden, laughter-filled years, the little boy and his friends jumped, shouted, imagined, and giggled with Honey. But the boy grew older, and his joyful visits that Honey loved grew farther and farther apart, until it was rare he would show up at all. Life for Honey eventually grew depressing and lonely, and she found herself angry with the boy for abandoning her like this. She had only ever provided him with love, shelter, happiness, and fun; what had she done to be deserted and left lonely, surrounded by nothing but trees and insects?

What was once a beautiful fort became deteriorated and bitter, a shadow of her past self. Over time, all of her pleasant memories of pretend play and games turned sour in her mind, and they only brought up feelings of self-pity and resentment.

She was barely conscious when the storm started to brew, a dark mass heading in from the east. The trees around her whipped against her weakened walls, and the wind screamed and howled around her. *Good*, thought Honey miserably, *maybe today the wind will pick me up and carry me far away, or at least have the mercy to scatter me across the ocean, where I can die among the fishes.*

She was thinking about the ocean she had never seen before, when she heard a faint yell, far off in the distance. Honey strained to hear the cries over the onslaught of rain and wind.

“Charlotte! Grab my hand; we have to go this way!”

It was so quiet, it was practically not there at all, but unmistakably she heard the voice of a child in distress.

The wind subsided for a few moments and Honey could distinguish the voices of two children, both young girls by the sounds of it; though, it was hard to tell over the gale.

“Look, a house! We can stay there until the storm finishes!”

The bushes shook, and two drenched and distraught girls appeared, clad in bright-pink raincoats, completely covered in mud. Their auburn hair straggled down their faces, with bits of twigs and leaves sticking out. The younger one was crying and clinging onto the hand of the older sister, who was squinting through the rain at Honey.

“It’s just an old tree house!”

“It’s all we have; get inside, quickly!”

The girls clamoured inside and curled up together in a corner, shaking violently. At the sight of this, Honey’s cynicism and spite towards children shrank into nothing, and Honey vowed to protect these girls. She wrapped herself around them, expelling all spaces, and braced herself against nature. They stayed like that for hours, and as the storm raged around them, Honey felt nothing but at peace.

“Look, Amy! It stopped raining!” the younger girl exclaimed, running outside.

“Charlotte? Amy?” a deep voice called, and a man emerged into the small clearing.

He had brown hair and bright eyes filled with worry. As he saw the girls, he ran forward, scooped them up in a hug, and swung them around. A few minutes later, the man stood up, and looked around in awe. “Ahh . . . I remember this place.”

Thump-thump, thump-thump, thump-thump. . . “There you go, girls; good as new.” Honey felt herself being filled with new hope and love as the two little girls bounced around her, giddy with excitement. As they ran about, shrieking with delight, Honey was whole once again.

by *Chloe Atherton* (13 years)
Ottawa, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Grief

Grief will not trap us, but that day. . . .

The rain was pounding on my window. I stayed in bed, not wanting to get up.

“Lilith Alice Smith! Get out of bed right now!” my mom barked.

“Fine,” I groaned. I got up slowly and I put on my outfit. I dragged myself to the washroom, then I heard the phone ring and someone pick it up. Then, a painful scream rang around the house. I hadn’t thought much about it. This scream was different, but I didn’t notice. I just continued brushing my teeth.

When I went downstairs, my mom was crying, my dad was supporting her, and my older brother was quiet. I should have noticed then—these things usually never happen—but I still didn’t. “What happened?” I asked.

“Your grandpa called,” my dad said quietly.

“So?”

“How can you be so ignorant, Lilith? Your grandma has died!” my mom shrieked.

My brain stopped. I only cared this much because Grandma was my favourite family member other than my parents and my brother. She was extremely kind and she was never mad at anyone for more than five minutes. She was always a happy soul, and others also seemed happier with her around.

I stumbled back.

“We’re all going to your grandpa’s house, nowhere else. We all need support,” my mom whispered.

“I’m so sorry I was ignorant, but I never imagined—” I said. I shuddered.

My dad gave me a squeeze on the shoulder and a weak smile.

The rest of the day, we were at my grandpa’s house with the rest of our family, mourning. The rain was pounding down the entire day. Gramps secretly had given me something, although Grandma’s things were supposed to be kept with him. It was Grandma’s golden locket.

“She would have wanted this to be passed on, generation after generation, and you were always her favourite. Give it to one of your grandkids when you’re older. Pass it on and keep it in the family,” Gramps had said. I saw a sliver of a smile under those grieving eyes of his.

That was the worst day of my life.

Today is the day I’ve been dreading. It’s Grandma’s funeral. I’m sitting on my bed, staring outside. The sun isn’t up yet, but everyone’s getting ready. My mom’s already dressed when she comes in to help me get ready. She’s wearing a plain, knee-length dress that’s traditionally black. She’s wearing two diamond earrings and she also has a diamond bracelet that Grandma had given her when she was pregnant with me as a congratulations gift.

“What am I wearing?” I ask wearily.

My mom takes out a beautifully decorated dress. It’s black, no surprise. It’s one of those dresses that has thick straps. Around the collar is a golden lace design. The waist part is slightly tight, and the dress is quite flowing. “It’s beautiful,” I whisper, awed.

“I hoped you’d like it,” she says, slightly smiling.

I get in the dress, and it isn’t even itchy. My mom and I go to the washroom, and while I brush my teeth, my mom puts my long hair in a French braid. I’m ready now. Then, I remember something. I run to my room and get the golden locket that used to belong to Grandma. I put it on. “Now, I’m ready.”

Everybody’s waiting for me downstairs. We pile into our small, white car wordlessly, and my dad drives to the church.

The church ceremony is extremely depressing. I open my locket during the ceremony, as if opening it would help me, and inside, something is engraved: “*Ma chérie*, Lili, do not stay depressed. I will be with you—forever. Love, Grandma.” I read it several times. Then, I look up and realize that the ceremony is over, and it’s time to go to the cemetery.

I take my mom's hand and rub it. "Grandma hasn't left us yet." My mom nods.

I know now that Grandma did not leave us, but the grief is hard to bear. Life will never be the same without Grandma, but we will carry on. Grief will not trap us.

by Leilei Cui (10 years)

Oakville, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Unpacking

The living room was stacked with a dozen packing boxes, labelled “Kitchen,” “Dining room,” “Living room,” etc. Lizzy hated these boxes with a passion. She didn’t want to move out of this little house in the countryside, where she and her dad, Jonathan, lived.

Every room in this house used to be spotless and tidy when Lizzy’s mom was alive. Now, with the packing boxes, it was messy and dusty. Lizzy knew she would miss the times when she could lie on the golden-brown couch in the living room, talking to her mom. They would talk about anything, like how to decorate the newly bought dining table or where to put the flowers Lizzy just picked from the garden. After her mom passed away, Lizzy and her dad tried to keep everything the same, but it was very hard.

Three months ago, Jonathan received a lucrative job offer in the city and started to talk about moving, much to Lizzy’s horror. She never wanted to leave the house; this was the dearest and most beloved place to her. This was where she grew up, where she spent her time with her mom, and where her mother had the stroke.

Lizzy’s dad was adamant about moving into the city though. He tried to convince her to move constantly for three months. “Lizzy, you know Daddy has to move. My work is there, and it pays more.”

“Just take the bus,” she replied, rolling her eyes.

“But no bus route is going in the direction of my new company!”

Lizzy rolled her eyes once more and stormed off into her bedroom.

Several days later, Jonathan told Lizzy he was bringing her into the city to meet with Gabrielle. Lizzy asked her dad who Gabrielle was, and he told her Gabrielle was a real estate agent who would help them find a new house. Lizzy immediately loathed her.

When Lizzy finally met the agent, her dislike for the woman grew. Gabrielle was a stern woman from what Lizzy could see. Her lips were always in a frown, and she snapped, “Don’t touch that!” whenever Lizzy’s fingers flicked her knick-knacks.

Gabrielle and Jonathan negotiated, while Lizzy tried her best not to glower. After they had reviewed over five houses, she burst out, “I don’t want to move!”

Gabrielle jumped at this sudden outburst, and Lizzy’s dad pulled her aside and talked in a forced whisper, “Not here, Lizzy!”

Lizzy dashed out and took the bus home by herself.

Sitting on her bed, she saw her mom smiling at her from the hardwood, embossed frame on her bedside table. As she tried to recall all the lovely moments with her mom and father in this little house, Lizzy realized her mom would want to see both her and her dad happy. Lizzy’s precious memories of her family and this house would be with her forever, no matter where she lived. Making a decision, she picked up the phone and called a moving company.

Three days later, Gabrielle found a house for Jonathan and prepared a book of forms for him to sign in her office. Jonathan first looked at Lizzy, and then looked over the forms. He slowly turned to Gabrielle. “I . . . I’m not taking this offer.” Lizzy stared at her father in amazement.

“You’re not buying the house?” Gabrielle’s eyes were wide behind her glasses.

“I’m not buying it,” he repeated, more firmly this time. “Let’s go, Lizzy.” She gaped at her father as he led her out of the office building.

On the way home, Lizzy finally spoke up. “Why didn’t you buy the house?”

“Because you’re more important than money, and I love you.” Lizzy beamed with joy, taking and holding her dad’s hand tightly.

When they finally approached their home, they found a moving truck parked in their driveway. “I called them to come!” Lizzy explained to her dad, who was puzzled.

“Why? I thought you didn’t want to move?”

“Because I love you too,” Lizzy grinned.

Tears were in both of their eyes. Lizzy’s dad crushed her in his arms. The warm and crushing hug brought back to Lizzy all the sweet memories in the house.

“I guess we don’t need to move these boxes anymore,” Lizzy said, as she stepped away from her father’s embrace. She chuckled as she turned towards the moving truck. “Do you think they’ll provide an unpacking service?”

by Emily Yu (10 years)
Toronto, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Lucky, the Good Luck Dog

Once, there was a golden retriever named Lucky. Lucky was no ordinary dog. Lucky was a special golden retriever. He always brought good luck to his owner and every dog he met. Lucky had two best friends. One was named Ally, a Bichon-Yorkie, and the other was a wiener dog named Franky. The three dogs were always in the newspaper, because they would always save dogs and a lot of people. Their friendship was the strongest part of them, because when they were together, they were always saving dogs and people.

One day, there was a dog parade to celebrate dogs from tall to small. When Lucky, Ally, and Franky arrived, all the attention went to the three dogs and not the parade! All the dogs on the floats in the parade were finally noticed when Lucky, Ally, and Franky found a good hiding spot and were out of sight.

While watching the parade, Lucky told Ally and Franky that they should raise a lot of money for all the dogs in Doggie Ville, because they saw that the floats were wrecked, shredded, and broken.

“That’s a great idea!” said Ally.

“How are we going to raise money?” asked Franky, confused.

“I have the perfect plan,” said Lucky, smiling big.

As Lucky whispered his plan to Ally and Franky, he was interrupted by his owner. She was calling Lucky to come home. Lucky said goodbye to his friends and told them to meet him at the playground the next day at 8:00 a.m. sharp. Lucky was up all night finding dogs to help him and his friends raise money.

In the morning, Ally and Franky were right on time. Lucky had brought another dog friend of his to help raise money for all the dogs in Doggie Ville. Lucky introduced Duke to Ally and Franky. Once they met, it was time to get down to business of raising money.

The plan was for every dog to go to a part of Doggie Ville, and they each had two bags to collect money. They each wore a sign that read, “Hi, I am trying to raise money for all the dogs in Doggie Ville. Will you please help me?” Lucky asked Ally, Franky, and Duke to meet at the playground when they were done.

When they all got back to the playground, they counted all the money. They had collected \$100,000! They were so happy that Lucky forgot to think of how to get the money to the mayor of Doggie Ville. Then he stopped and said, “What if I call my owner and she takes us to the mayor with the money?” suggested Lucky. “Would that work?”

Ally replied, “There’s only one way to find out! Let’s go!”

Lucky signalled his owner, and she came as fast as a cheetah chasing a gazelle. Her name was Marina. “Why have you called me on such short notice, Lucky?” Marina asked. She could understand dog language, so she knew exactly what Lucky was asking of her.

Lucky told Marina about raising the money for Doggie Ville and bringing all the money to the mayor. Marina said that she would take Lucky and his pals to the Doggie Ville Town Hall where the mayor worked.

When they arrived, they noticed a sign that read, “No dogs allowed inside Town Hall.” Marina asked Lucky and his buds to wait patiently outside.

Marina strolled through the fancy glass doors of Town Hall. She walked down a long hallway and took a left, then marched confidently into the mayor’s office. The walls were painted a pale caramel colour and the carpet was a glamorous magenta pink with sparkly blue polka dots. The desk was made of a polished dark wood that shined in the light of the yellowy light bulbs hanging from the red and white striped ceiling.

Mayor Mayo was an old wrinkly man who smelled like stinky socks that haven’t been washed for weeks. He had no hair on his wrinkly head, but a very large white beard that touched the ground. When Marina entered Mayor Mayo’s office, she asked if he could come outside, so he could meet the four hardworking dogs. Marina told Mayor Mayo how they had raised

100,000 dollars for all the puppies in Doggie Ville. Mayor Mayo promised to only use the money that Lucky and his pals Ally, Franky, and Duke had raised for *dog purposes only!*

by Marina Smith (9 years)
Regina, Saskatchewan

HONOURABLE MENTION

Mr. Cloud Chewed a Bubble Gum

One day, there was a cloud. He found a piece of bubble gum on top of his cloudy head. So . . . he chewed it up.

He waited and waited. Finally, he got to blow the bubble gum. There was a big bubble. He wasn't sure that it was big enough. He popped it. It splattered all over his face!

What was he going to do? Could he wash it? Could he rain it off? What could he get it off with?

Finally, he got it off with some rain. So, he blew, blew, and blew a bigger bubble. He still wasn't sure whether it was big enough. He popped it again.

He chewed, chewed, and chewed another bubble gum. He blew, blew, blew, and blew, until he got stuck in the bubble gum! "I guess it's too big for me," the cloud said.

He flew higher and higher until he was in outer space. He found more bubble gum up there.

by Lily Perez (5 years)
Winnipeg, Manitoba