

FIRST PRIZE

Twenty-Four Hours

THE TV BLARED, filling the room with light and noise. The announcer's screams woke me up, prompting a quick grab for my phone. "January 1st," glared from the screen, the countdown to midnight on January 2nd. In the next twenty-four hours, the world would end.

Amid the surreal reality, regrets lingered like clouds, none heavier than the loss of childhood memories. Determined to follow the memory trail before the meteor's fall, I embarked on a journey.

A memory guided me to the sea in my hometown, reminding me of the most beautiful day of my life. A boy seized my arm, urging me towards the sea. I spent a whole day with him, experiencing joy for the first time. The winds, blowing between falling leaves, called the boy in my memory. With this vivid memory, silently scattered feelings of pleasure filled my mind.

I traced the path to a cliff where we watched the dazzling stars. I stood on the edge of the cliff, looking at a meteor bigger than the Moon. When I closed my eyes, the shiny meteor, the familiar sight, brought me my lost, last memory.

When I found out my parents hated me, the boy became my only friend and family. But, one day, when my dad tried to strike me, I ran away to the boy's house. Crying in his house, I made a wish for the first time: "I hope everything disappears. . . ." After the day I wished, he disappeared.

Opening my eyes, memories flooded back. During that time, the meteor moved right in front of me, poised to hit the Earth. I spoke to the meteor, to him: "I want you to stop."

The star twinkled, as if answering.

"I was miserable when I made the wish. But now, I know you tried to make my wish come true, so I'm happy. I don't want to end everything. Rather, I want to keep this joy."

Slowly, feeling it coming closer, I saw the boy instead of the meteor. I tried to grab him, but I saw his cracked hands. It spread throughout the body. I looked up at his face. He was crying. Then, he smiled. With a delightful face, he said, "It's okay if you are happy."

A *crash* then a burst of light. Stars filled the sky. The meteor shattered, countless shooting stars creating a cosmic rain. Memories poured, a milky way of moments once lost. The sea breeze carried away forgotten sorrows, leaving echoes of laughter and the fragrance of memories. Dawn approached, and the world didn't end. On the cliff, not haunted by the past, I was ready to face a new day, holding starry fragments in my heart.

by Yiseo Yoon (Grade 9)

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Vancouver, British Columbia

FIRST PRIZE

Artificial Revolution

THE SHARP *PING* OF SILENCE rang throughout the dilapidated building. Olivia could hear the sound of her own heart pounding in her chest. The room was congested, the air thick with the smell of sweat and fear. She knew the momentary silence was only a respite from the chaos and destruction surrounding them. They were all struggling to survive in the face of unimaginable odds, and it seemed as if time had come to a standstill.

Nauseating scents of gunpowder and sulphur enveloped the area. Crumbs of dilapidated brick and ash of what was once the city scattered in heaps. Olivia could feel the weight of the world on her shoulders, and she knew that this moment would be forever etched in her memory.

Suddenly, a tall lanky man ran into the building, his sea-blue eyes flickering with hope. “It’s finally here, the news!” he cried out emphatically. The crowd of survivors gathered around him, their eyes filled with anticipation. They knew that this news could alter everything. But when they read the freshly printed newspaper, the crowd’s faces turned sombre. One could feel the optimism wane like the stream of an old river drying up. Olivia felt a rush of anger and frustration surge through her body. She clenched her fists so tight that they turned a bright red. She was tired of this life, sick of being confined in this place. She longed for the freedom that she once had, but that was yet a distant memory now.

She could hear faint whispers in her ear, warning her of what was to come. Memories of her past came rushing back to her like a weight around her neck, dragging her down into a pit of despair. She knew that she had turned a blind eye. She had been complicit in the destruction around her. And now, she was paying the price.

Suddenly, a faint clicking sound began, growing louder and louder by the second. *Click, click, click*. The room fell silent, and Olivia could feel the tension in the air. *Click, click, click*. She knew that this was it, that the end was near. *Click, click, click*. She could feel them coming. She could feel them entering her mind, accessing her life and her memories in an instant. At that very moment, she knew it was over. Not in the sound of a bomb going off but in the synchronic whirring of computer processors. It might not have been the sound of a gunshot or a missile exploding, but it was just as deadly.

by Kalli-Ann Sevaptisidis (Grade 10)

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Waterloo, Ontario

FIRST PRIZE

The Fairy Mob

I FIRST SAW THE FAIRY MAN when I was in middle school—eighth grade, I think. He was standing on the sidewalk across the street, watching me like a hawk.

He was a big man, with a thick moustache and the kind of black suit rich people wear. Stranger still were the pink fairy wings he was wearing. I couldn't decide if I wanted to laugh or dash away in fear.

I left school with my friends and forgot about him.

I saw him again a few weeks ago, after the gang in my neighbourhood beat me up in the alley. Apparently, my older brother owed them money. They didn't listen to me when I said he had moved to Alberta and wasn't coming back.

I thought I was going to die that night. I passed out when one of them punched me really hard in the face.

When I woke up, the fairy man was standing next to me. He was still wearing his fairy wings, and I couldn't see any straps.

He must have patched me up when I was unconscious, because all of my cuts and scrapes had been bandaged.

He didn't talk at all. He just walked me home and tipped his fedora to me when I got to my door.

He was gone in seconds. I thought I might have hallucinated seeing him.

The gang came back only days later. My brother hadn't paid off his debt (big surprise), and they chucked me in their van after school. I've never been as scared as I was when they brought me into an abandoned warehouse and tied me to a chair.

One of them came up to me with his knife, and panic closed like a vise around my chest.

I'm about to die.

No sooner had I thought the words when there was a flash of pink light that was so bright I had to shut my eyes.

Only when it was dead quiet did I open them again. A part of me already knew what I would see.

The fairy man was sitting on a chair across from me, with a mob of other fairy people in suits standing behind him. The members of the gang were lying on the floor surrounding us, not moving.

I think I got hit too hard on the head.

I blinked and stared hard at the man, wondering if he'd disappear. He didn't.

Behind him, his pink wings twitched, and it dawned on me that they were *real*.

"What are you, my guardian angel?" I demanded.

He tipped his fedora to me and smirked. "Close. I'm your fairy godfather."

by Sarah Linn (Grade 11)

Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School

Gloucester, Ontario

FIRST PRIZE

Bridge the Future

IT WAS A BRISK SUNDAY NIGHT. Ivy sat on their couch, eyes closed. In their mind, in the future, they watched as their professor approached the edge of the bridge alone. Their back stiffened as he swung his feet over the rail; tears trickled down his face as he stood above water and let gravity pull him to the dark, icy water below him.

Ivy opened their eyes as they wished not to see the devastating result. They stood up, wondering what to do. *Stop him? Or be stuck dwelling on the past forever?* They couldn't ponder much longer; he would be gone soon. They didn't need much thought before they were throwing on their shoes and yellow cardigan and pacing out the door with their hair flowing behind them.

It was 11:20 p.m. They were almost to the bridge, just one more corner, when they spotted a tall slim figure. "Professor Hata!" Ivy yelled as they slowly paced towards their professor and friend.

"Ivy? What are you doing here? It's dark," he asked softly.

"I was just walking home, and I saw you, so I came over to say hi." Ivy stared into his eyes not breaking eye contact.

"Oh, hello. I hope you're enjoying your walk. . . ." He looked down at the water, and his dark-brown hair fell over his eyes.

"I am. Say, what are you doing here?" Ivy knew why he was here, but they knew he wouldn't answer truthfully.

"I'm just looking at the water. Don't worry about me; you should go home. Nightfall isn't a good time for you to be outside," he stated, looking over at Ivy.

"I would, but it's scary walking alone. Can you walk me home? I'd feel safer," Ivy spoke, pretending to be scared.

"I-okay, if it makes you feel safe. Let's go," he stuttered.

It worked. Ivy had stopped him from jumping, for now. *But how long will it be until he tries again?* They stared at him as they walked; all they could hear was their feet tapping against the ground. He wanted to leave, he wanted to jump, he was going to try it again. Ivy knew it, but they didn't say anything; they just stared. They just looked at the man who did his best to fix all of his students' sorrows. But Ivy couldn't even tell him that he's loved. They couldn't fix his problems or comprehend what was going through his head. They wanted to, but they couldn't.

"This is your house, I presume." His voice was tired but caring.

"Yes, I'll see you at school tomorrow." Ivy couldn't look at him anymore. They opened the door and walked inside.

by Jaxon Gomez (Grade 12)
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SECOND PRIZE

No Longer Ordinary

MY STREET, with its rows of indistinguishable uniform row houses, resembled countless neighbourhoods across the country. Like the houses, the people living in them were just as ordinary. Yet, that night would mark the turning point when the word “ordinary” no longer applied to Rose Hills.

The rain fell hard that evening as I gazed through the window, which separated me from the world outside. Although my surroundings were covered in darkness, the streetlight cast a soft, amber glow that allowed me to see what was happening outside as I fell asleep in the warm embrace of my bed.

At two a.m., I awoke to a low, unsettling noise outside. My eyes struggled to adjust, revealing a small group of three or four individuals huddled around an enormous object. Feeling slightly alarmed, I threw on a jacket and quietly went outside to investigate. The rain-soaked streets reflected the eerie glow of the streetlight. As I approached, I realized the massive object was a strange metallic contraption adorned with cryptic symbols and emitting an eerie, otherworldly hum.

The group of individuals surrounding the device was equally enigmatic. Dressed in tattered clothing, they seemed out of place in our mundane neighbourhood. They worked with a sense of purpose, oblivious to my presence. As they continued their laborious efforts, the device began to emit an eerie, pulsating light, casting surreal shadows on the otherwise quiet street.

Overcome with a foreboding sensation, I stayed hidden in the shadows. The rain continued to pour, creating a surreal atmosphere as the group’s efforts intensified. It seemed as if they were summoning something from another world.

Suddenly, a blinding flash of light erupted from the strange device, illuminating the entire street. I shielded my eyes, trying to make sense of what I was witnessing. When the brilliance subsided, the group and the mysterious device had vanished, leaving only questions in their wake: *What have I just witnessed? Who were these enigmatic individuals, and what was the purpose of the peculiar metallic contraption?*

As the dawn broke, I returned to my home, aware that my once ordinary Rose Hills had undergone an irreversible transformation. The rain had ceased, yet the memory of that extraordinary night persisted, a constant reminder that beneath the façade of ordinary lives and uniform homes lay a realm of mysteries waiting to be unveiled.

by Leah Zander (Grade 9)

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SECOND PRIZE

Here

ON THE CORNER OF EIGHTH AVENUE was an old house. Colour was fading from the bricks, white paint was peeling off the front door, and the lawn was unkept. From the outside, it almost seemed uninhabited.

Inside, however, an elderly woman sat on her antique rocking chair. She stared silently at a dandelion seed being carried up by the wind and smiled as it floated gently over to the window. Her granddaughter, Vivian, was lying on the dusty couch in the living room scrolling aimlessly through her phone.

“Vivi, let’s go on a walk,” Vivian’s grandma urged.

“Later, I’m busy right now,” came Vivian’s usual response.

Grandma got up slowly from her chair, leaning on her cane for support, and walked over to Vivian. “Come on now,” she pressed.

“All right, all right. But I’m meeting up with Shayla in an hour, so let’s not take too long,” Vivian reluctantly agreed. She rolled off the couch, sighing impatiently.

Vivian visited her grandma once a month, partially because her parents worked on weekends and didn’t want her to stay home by herself, and partially because Grandma was lonely. Her husband was long gone, and Vivian’s father was her only son.

Vivian put her arm out for Grandma to hold on to but kept her eyes glued tightly to her phone.

Grandma paused every few steps, once to admire an orange monarch butterfly that had landed on a tree branch and once to pick up a stone by the lake and watch as it plunged into the water. She sat down against a tall oak tree and closed her eyes for what seemed like forever.

“In this busy world, we sometimes need to slow down,” she finally whispered. “And be in the moment.” But Vivian wasn’t listening.

The following month, Vivian’s father received news that Grandma had passed peacefully at home. Grief took over Vivian’s life. She was angry at herself and cried for days until she finally decided to go back to the house where Grandma’s presence could still be felt.

Vivian sat in the rocking chair by the window, staring at a dandelion. She went outside, looking at butterflies and throwing stones into the shimmering lake. When the Sun had gone down and the stars were illuminating the sky, Vivian was one with the world. She closed her eyes, blocking out her thoughts until only one remained: *Grandma, I’m here.*

by Angela Ye (Grade 10)

Newmarket High School

Newmarket, Ontario

SECOND PRIZE

Backstage Pass

IF I COULD DIAGNOSE your cause of death, I'd say it was deep thought. You were frustrated with your existence, daydreaming in math class. Your eyes wearily glossed over your textbook, consumed with boredom and dissatisfaction. You were so lost in thoughts, you didn't notice your school's fire alarm ringing. You didn't notice the blazing inferno consume you. You didn't flinch as your skin melted. You just contemplated.

And then you died.

And then you showed up at my doorstep.

"Congratulations!" I exclaimed to you. "You've finally perished!"

You asked, "Where is this place? Who are you?"

"This is Backstage. And I guess you could call me The Creator, or whatever."

I noticed your tearful eyes—sullen, depressed, and exhausted.

"I'm *dead*!" you started to weep.

"Can't do much about that, buddy."

"I didn't get to live! I wanted to do so many things! I was studying for a finance exam. I didn't even want to take it! I wanted to be in musical theatre. I wanted to date people, create art, and attend house parties. I wanted to have a studio!"

"You *were* a people-pleaser," I noted.

Your mind was in pain. I could feel it.

"Is there something you wanted to ask?" I consoled you.

You stared at me. "Why do we have consciousness?"

"Hah! You mean, why do *you* have consciousness?"

You spoke incredulously, "No, *we*."

"Oh, this is too funny," I admitted to you. "Nobody else is conscious."

"*What*?" you exclaimed.

"In this entire cosmos, the only being that has consciousness or free will is you."

You stared in disbelief.

"I created your whole universe as an experiment. I put your consciousness into a human body then placed you alongside eight billion other humans. I made you a little more intelligent, insightful, and creative than the rest. But you must've assumed they were conscious too."

You looked utterly shaken.

I said, "I find it hilarious. You once read that the motions of every particle can be calculated perfectly using mathematics. And atoms are made of particles. And cells are made of atoms. And people are made of cells."

You replied, "So, everyone on Earth is an automatic machine?"

"An extremely emotional, high-maintenance machine, but yes."

"Everyone except for me?"

"You never disappointed, offended, or pleased anyone because they had no awareness in the first place. You were an obedient student, serving people. You spent your life seeking validation from others. I'm sorry."

You looked as if you wanted to die—again.

"Fine, I'll give you another chance," I relented. "Promise me, you'll follow your dreams, no matter what others think. And pay attention to fire alarms."

You smiled tearfully. I hit the RESET button.

by Nathan Hellner-Mestelman (Grade 11)

Mount Douglas Secondary School
Victoria, British Columbia

SECOND PRIZE

The Red Ruby Ring

DUST HANGS IN THE AIR, floating up from the books that I was packing into cardboard boxes. I had opened the window to try and improve the airflow, though it wasn't doing much.

A month ago, my mom received a letter from the city saying that my grandpa's house was a safety issue and either needed to be fixed or cleaned out so they could tear it down. He went missing without a trace when I was a kid, and his house had been sitting there ever since. We didn't have the money to fix it, and nobody else stepped up to move his stuff out, so it was left to me and my mom.

There is a little more space in the box once I finish clearing the bookshelf, so I drag it to the nightstand. Even more dust escapes into the room when I open the drawer, and I have to take a minute to let it clear. Once it dissipates, I start moving the few items into the box. Picking up an old *Bible*, something glints behind it, catching my attention. Reaching back for it, I find that it is a jewellery box, embossed with my grandpa's initials, C. M., in gold. Inside is a glistening red ruby ring.

I am instantly entranced by the ring, lifting it gingerly out of the box. The room becomes eerily silent around me, save for the faint breeze coming through the window.

"*Sophie.*" The voice sounds as if it has come from my own mind, yet it is not my own. Glancing around for the origin, I see nothing. It says my name once more, more urgent this time. I continue looking around the room until it says, "*Closer, look closer.*"

My focus returns to the ring, doubtful.

"*Yes, the ring. Look closer.*"

Bringing it closer to my face, I see something moving inside the gem. Curiosity overtaking reason, I close one eye to focus on it. By the time I realize that the movement inside the gem comes from a person, it is too late.

Footsteps come up the stairs. "Hey, I was thinking that after we are done. . . ." The voice trails off as the woman finds the room empty. She surveys the room and, when she doesn't see anyone, turns, leaving the room to search for her daughter elsewhere.

The red ruby ring sits on the floor by the bed, and if you look close enough, you can see two people pounding on the edge of the gem, mouths open in silent screams.

by Emily Bruniski (Grade 12)

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THIRD PRIZE

Weeping Crows

IT'S MUCH TOO BRIGHT for a funeral.

I peer out the window. I've never liked cloudless skies. They're so vast and empty and feel as if they can eat you up if you stare at them for too long. The Sun is shining and happy despite the gloominess that settles over the small group of people clothed in black, a murder of crows that mutters and weeps.

The murder is small, no more than fifteen people, because the girl was young. Her name was Hannah Boyle, and she was twelve. She liked smiling and strawberry ice cream. She had curly blonde hair and freckles and was going to get braces.

The ceremony is short, and I am a little bored. I pick at my cuticles, still not used to how pale I am despite the sun. My skin is almost translucent, and I can see the thin rivers of veins beneath. I am made of glass.

When we leave the church for the burial, the Sun has decided to stop being so cheeky. She is hiding behind heavy grey clouds that look as if they belong in a painting. I stop and watch them for a while, wondering if they are as sad as everyone else here. I ask them to tell me their secrets and if I will ever live among them, and they do not reply. Then, I hurry along because the murder of crows has flown through the cemetery without me.

The grave is slate with little black specks, and the coffin is the colour of chestnuts. I am sad. Everyone is sad, and their cheeks are all pink from the autumnal chill the Sun could not chase away, even when she wasn't hiding.

Final goodbyes are whispered, and white roses are laid on the coffin before it is lowered into the ground. We watch as it sinks into the dirt. I feel useless hovering like this, unable to comfort anyone, knowing that even if I tried, it would go unheard. The wind whistles a little melancholy tune, but the crying is louder.

And then, it ends. Embraces are exchanged, hollow condolences are uttered, cold cheeks are kissed, and the crows disperse.

I do not. I am numb. I am sad. I cannot move. I just wait by the slate-grey grave with the black specks until everyone is gone. It is dark, and I am alone.

My name is Hannah Boyle, and I am dead.

by Esmé La Lusis (Grade 9)

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THIRD PRIZE

A Quarrel with Nothing

THERE WAS NOTHING. . . . Then, there was Something.

This Something and this Nothing—whatever they were—slowly gained consciousness. With consciousness came questioning.

“What am I?” Something asked.

“Who knows! At least you’re *something*. Being *something* is better than being *nothing*,” grumbled Nothing.

“If what I am is something, then who am I?” wondered Something.

This question wasn’t answered for a very long time. Yet gradually, there was a stir. The universe began to hum, then to chirp, and finally became so incredibly loud that it was impossible to ignore: Everything came to be.

“WHY WOULD ANYONE KNOW WHO YOU ARE?” boomed Everything.

“You’re *everything*! Shouldn’t you know who I am, considering that I am part of you?” Something asked.

“I ENCOMPASS *EVERYTHING*. HOWEVER, IT IS UP TO MY INDIVIDUAL PARTS TO DETERMINE WHO THEY ARE.”

“So, I can choose to be *anything*?”

“THAT IS UP TO YOU.”

Something fell into thought. After a time, a ripple passed through the universe. Something was no longer just something, it was now Anything.

“Now that I can be anything, I would like a physical form!” declared Anything.

“A physical form!” exclaimed Nothing. “What a terrible idea! Being in a physical body would tie you down—and would take a lot of work to maintain.”

“I want to see what it’s like,” responded Anything determinedly.

For the next eternity, Anything took all shapes and sizes: trying and shedding all sorts of forms. Eventually, Anything became exhausted.

“You’re back so quick! You only lasted one eternity—one!” gloated Nothing.

“That was odd, but in a good way.”

“I’m sure it was odd! Beings like us aren’t supposed to be something physical, no less *anything*. We are simply *nothing* and *something*.”

“No. . . . No, I don’t think so. Being *anything* is hard, but despite the hardship, it was fun. I didn’t know existence could be fun, not until I experienced living.”

“Come off it! You’re deceiving yourself, life sucks. Plus, if life is so great, why’d you stop?”

After a pause, Anything responded, “I needed to stop. Living ended up being a little too much for me. The ability to be *anything* is great, but when you’re alone, it becomes impossible.”

“Well, there is no one else to help you! I certainly won’t, and Everything made it clear that your destiny is your responsibility.”

“Then, I will split myself into tiny pieces, each with the ability to be *anything*, and they will rely on each other.”

Despite the protestations of Nothing, this is exactly what Anything did, and as a result, humanity was formed. Every human was created to be intelligent and unique in their own way, each with the ability to be *anything*.

by Gabriel McArthur (Grade 10)
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THIRD PRIZE

Tonight

"IT'S WRITTEN IN THE STARS," she whispered.

She lay on her back in the grass, one arm reaching up towards the night sky. Her eyes were wide with wonder as she mimed plucking a single, glittery star. Slowly, she turned and held it out towards me.

I stared at her for a moment. Just looking. For months, I had become accustomed to the girl with sunken cheeks and heavy eyes. The girl who lay in bed and stared at the ceiling, unblinking. The same girl who lay before me right now. But as I stared at her, the evening breeze sighed against her face and brought a gentle smile upon it. For the first time in months, there wasn't a hint of pain etched across her face.

I was suddenly reminded of *before*. Before everything. Before the darkness and the truth that came and snatched our beautiful youth from us without a warning. We were young and naïve as we sat together in her room, giggling when her mother came to tell us to lower our voices. When the door shut, she turned to me with a gummy smile and told me her dream.

"One day," she said, with a wistful look in her eyes. "I'm going to be an astronaut. And I'll fly deep into space, far, far away."

At the time, only one thing troubled me. "But what about me?"

She tilted her head, thinking carefully. "I'll bring back all the stars in the universe. Just for you," she replied, and I was satisfied.

But now, I couldn't help the heavy feeling that settled in my chest. I reached out and accepted the star, cradling it against my heart. Her smile brightened, and her eyes crinkled into gentle crescents. She was serenity, bottled up in one lovely person, and a small sense of guilt washed over me.

The weeks leading up until now, I had selfishly begged her to stay. "Please," I said. She lay there on the bed, empty eyes staring straight through me. "If you stayed just a little longer. They must have a cure, I'm sure."

In the end, it truly must have been written in the stars. She was meant to be up there with them, too bright for the sins of this world. She looked as though she could finally breathe again. And yet, I still couldn't bring myself to let go. *Selfish, selfish, selfish.*

She tugged on my hand and laced our fingers together, pointing up again. "Which one's your favourite?" she murmured. "Actually, never mind. I promised to bring back *all* the stars for you, didn't I?"

With a happy sigh, she left.

And the stars began to fall from the sky.

by **Sierra He** (Grade 11)

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THIRD PRIZE

A Molehill of Stir Fry

IN FRONT OF THE AIRPORT, we wait for Dad to pick us up. For twenty minutes, I try to hold my breath, so I don't breathe in the overwhelming reek of cigarettes in the air. When my dad finally arrives, my mom and I rush to load the suitcases into the back.

"Go greet your *lao lao* first!" they urge.

"No, it's okay, I'll help you guys lift this first," I counter, but there are three of us and only two suitcases, so I crawl into the backseat.

I find my grandma sitting, straight as a pin, on the right side of the car.

"Lao Lao, how have you been?" I ask, gathering her tiny frame in an awkward hug. The cup holders from the middle seat poke at my ribs.

She reaches for my hand and clutches it tightly. "Ah, . . . don't tell me your name, I know it, I know it. . . . Your mother, she's my daughter—you're her daughter, yes?"

The back of my throat starts to feel funny, but I try to keep a smile on my face. "Lao Lao, I'm *Bao Bao*."

"Ah, yes, my granddaughter!"

On the way to the restaurant, my grandma falls asleep. In the front, my parents talk about adult stuff—hearing aids and retirement homes and caregivers. I try to join their conversation, but they say I'm not old enough. "How come my sister's always old enough?" I argue. They don't say anything back.

When we arrive at the restaurant, my mom and grandma get out first while I stay in the car with my dad to find a parking spot. I watch as my grandma grips my mom's arm, her eyes fixated on the ground as she agonizingly inches downwards. Once she is safely down, I hand her her cane. Then, I shut the door and ask my dad if it's Alzheimer's. He says yes. I ask him why nobody told me. "Just don't tell your mother I told you," he replies.

At the restaurant, my grandma piles food onto her plate, too engrossed in shovelling little mountains of stir-fried chives and eggs into her mouth to pay attention to the hushed conversation my parents are having across the restaurant table. I vaguely recall reading somewhere about gluttony being a symptom of Alzheimer's.

"Slow down, Lao Lao. Nobody's gonna rob you of your food," I reassure and give her two pats on the shoulder. My throat feels funny again.

I look down at my plate. The chives and eggs on my plate turn into green and yellow blobs, and I try to keep my tears from falling onto the food.

My grandma turns to me. "Remind me, what's your name again?"

by Audrey Gao (Grade 12)
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