

FIRST PRIZE

forgive me for forgetting

shimmering silk of my hanbok slithers off my unreal flesh
etching into my bones, coarse despite the satin fabric
as the dress molds my form into forgotten parts of myself

i risk a glimpse to the gleam of the glass
aweing at the reflection of an unknown person

i look Korean

yet the eccentric dress fails to breathe back forgotten culture
my tongue unsuccessfully seeks under roots of cherry blossoms
for the buried melodies of childhood

clumsy childhood fingers of a soul once here
searches for the manipulation of tongue and laughter of culture
swirling in the midst of bitter plum tea and crumbling rice cakes

letters desperately strung together by my dense tongue
hide in the depths of the Korean liberation

my soul howls to recover the culture i have sent away

yet *i* am the criminal who stole the culture out of elegant Korean temples
the child who buried it under cemeteries of my grandparents
the little girl with tears as salty as oceans of Jeju Island
as she begged to forget
as she erased her identity

life before the current
integrates into blanket fogs of the Yellow Sea
until remnants of my soul become an imitation

the glass edges of the hanbok jeers at my foolishness
until i lose once again, undressing

mom, forgive me for forgetting
umma, forgive me for wanting to forget

by Kyo Lee (14 years old)
Waterloo, Ontario

SECOND PRIZE

Fake Gods

Spent day and night
With my head on the ground,
Forced prayers in my mouth,
Weapons to my back,
Blood on my face.

What does it feel like
To worship a god you don't believe in?
White-skinned, perfect,
So-called gods
That burn your churches to ashes
And put your children in the ground
Then make you a god for a day
When your death makes a spectacle
Only to strip your wings the next.

They'll make you play their game,
Where your goal isn't to earn
Their blessing and their love
But to keep your life,
Your dignity, your family,
And the score is always ten to zero.

It's so easy to forget
When they don't want you to remember
Because they will never see us as equals
Until they make us shed
Our coloured skin,
Which they believe to be a burden.

by Jennifer Kuang (15 years old)
Calgary, Alberta

THIRD PRIZE

Ghost Parlour

Do you remember our ice-cream shop,
Which feels as if it's miles away?
Do you remember the sun shining
And how the trees swayed?
Amid the summer heat and warmth,
Enveloped in the winter breeze.
All I could do was shiver
And hug your arms as you sneezed.

Was it a bird's song I heard,
Or could it have been your voice?
Was it all in my imagination
And then forgotten by choice?
I feel as if I've walked this path before,
Except it was in your presence.
Beside me resides an empty spot,
Filled with emotional resonance.

The sun has begun to set now,
And the city is coloured orange.
What I once felt many years ago,
Now suddenly feels so foreign.
I cannot help but remember
Our ghosts and where we went.
It seems as if our time is up—
A couple of years well spent.

But that is not why I called you here,
To weep and say my goodbyes.
I still have many questions
But forget them in my mind.

The stars and moon have risen now;
The sky has become dark.
And I have to ask you one more thing:
Do you remember our ice-cream shop?

by Patricia Chen (15 years old)
Vancouver, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

My Thoughts

My thoughts swirl around in my head
Filling me with a feeling of dread
There's no off switch; there's nothing I can do
But listen to these swirling thoughts brew

My hopes, regrets, worries, and dreams
Mix together in a steady stream
They endlessly change and combine
I can't start to keep them in line

What starts out as sane
Gets twisted and warped inside my brain
Being mentally stable
Is sounding more and more like a far-off fable

As I lie down and close my eyes
I can't tell the truth from lies
I try to keep them out, to no avail
And they just come back without fail

For each thought that I dismiss
Another five come that I cannot miss
Who, what, where, and when come by
And the worst one? Undoubtedly *why*

Uncountable whys plague my mind
The depths of them I cannot find
The answers are non-existent
But the thoughts are just so insistent

You'd think my brain was filled to the max
But more thoughts come to fill the cracks
Will this madness never end?
The thoughts are just too tightly penned

Just when I think it's over for me
Happier thoughts cause my worries to flee
As the moon lighting up a dark winter night
Positivity makes me all right

I'm okay now, no need to worry
My negative thoughts seem a bit blurry
As I lie down in my bed anew
I remember that tough times can be beaten too

by Sophie Coulombe (15 years old)
Waterloo, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Oh, Corona!

'Twas an ominous night when a bat flew with perfection,
But no one knew it carried an infection.
And soon, chaos would disrupt the world's hygiene,
All because of a virus named COVID-19.

It started in Wuhan, China, a little while back.
The world declared that they were under attack,
And within a month or two's time,
The Earth had been in lockdown full-time.

It arrived in Canada on the twenty-fifth of January;
By that point, COVID had become quite scary.
A little while later, I was introduced to Zoom,
And it would sow the seeds for weeks of gloom.

At first, online school felt like a joke,
But my own words, I would soon revoke.
The more I learned, the more I was fading,
For my lifestyle became even more degrading.

Even though life had not much to praise,
A small friend would come to brighten my days.
A new dog named Juna had entered the scene,
All because of COVID-19.

Slowly but surely, I took up a hobby or two,
I didn't have many options, so I'd have to make do.
And after a while, my mind felt clean,
All because of COVID-19.

Time drifted on, and early one morning, I finally came to school,
But the teachers and principal had a shocking new rule!
Everywhere I went, everyone would ask,
"What are you doing? Don't you have a mask?"

So, I'm at my desk right now, writing this ballad,
And my life is still as mixed as a salad.
All this COVID stuff feels like one giant blooper,
But I'm still optimistic for a better—and healthier—future!

by Ethan Perez (13 years old)
Calgary, Alberta

HONOURABLE MENTION

Little Fish, Big Pond

High school fears fill my head
Worries and disappointments of letting go of my friends
Teachers I will miss
New ones I will meet
Used to being the big fish in the little pond
Now, the little fish in the big pond

Find new friends, trustworthy and kind
Piles of homework stacked about
Waiting to be done, without a doubt
I wait and wander through the rushing halls
Bells ringing an eerie whine
Stress and sweat fill my mind
If I'm late, who am I?
And where's my A if I'm left behind?

Unknown voices
Unknown pressure
A new beginning
An unknown end
Unknown trust
Unknown area
I'm gonna get lost
Unknown teachers
Unknown friends
Who am I to have a say?
When I'm the little fish in the big pond

by Charmaine Lai (12 years old)
Vancouver, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

I'll Stand with You

Clear blue waters, serene at first sight
Shimmering under an ethereal light
One short second, but that's all it takes
For waves to engulf like constricting snakes
Swept into the water, fighting to the shore
But tumbling down deep to the ocean floor
Inhaling water, yearning for air
Met only by the water's sullen glare

The warning flicker of a teetering spark
Suddenly soars to strike its mark
Its vicious attack erupts in a blaze
Panic unfolds in the smothering haze
The scarlet embers, ferociously hot
Burn away at all plausible thought
It persists in the mind of unknowing victims
'Til they fall to their knees and beg oblivion

The gentle breath of a quiet world
Quickly turns laboured and starts to swirl
An invisible predator chasing you down
With the intention of ripping your feet from the ground
In the pause of a heartbeat, you're lifted to the sky
No premonition or warning, just the blink of an eye
But suddenly, you come crashing back to the Earth
And the wind twirls off, basking in mirth

Lush, green grass and smooth, paved roads
All that you stand on, all that you know
Suddenly crumbles beneath your shoes
A sudden shift—and blurred are your views
Daunting shadows quickly unearth
That you're no longer grounded on familiar turf
The world turned around and left you there
Desolate streets, not a soul anywhere

If you call my name, I'll come for you
Take your hand and help you through
Together, we'll make it to the end
I'll stand with you forever, my friend
I'll pull you out of the churning waves
We'll douse the fire, vanquish the flames
We'll lull the wind so that it won't stir
Carefully, slowly, we'll straighten the Earth
And everything will turn out all right

by Rachel Hesom (12 years old)
Winkler, Manitoba

HONOURABLE MENTION

Solitude

Society expects us to climb
For an endless amount of time
Conquer one mountain, there's another
It really is the ultimate bother

But if one were to reach the peak
No one is there to hear your shriek
Your fingers scrape this altitude
The only feeling is solitude

No more struggles, no more challenges
Being alone has some advantages
Looking down into the fog
Nothing, as blurry as a bog

Stuck at the top, no going back down
But up here, there's nothing around
The only thing left at this altitude
Is the sweet relief of solitude.

by Ray Zhang (12 years old)
Vancouver, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Fear

Fear.
Fear of heights.
Fear of pain.
Fear of enclosed spaces.
Fear of the unknown.

Flying on a plane, high above cities and towns,
Heartbeat faster than a jet, too afraid to look down.

A sharp needle piercing my skin, I'm silently screaming,
I'm terrified to feel pain, even if it's for my well-being.

Stuck in an elevator, trembling with fright,
Gasping for air, while my eyes are shut tight.

In a country full of people, not one familiar face,
I'm too worried to explore in this terrifying new place.

Fear of loneliness.
Fear of failure.
Fear of the dark.
Fear of sickness.

Becoming a new person, keeping up with trends,
Just so I'm not lonely and have tons of friends.

Studying throughout the day and night, even for a simple test,
For when there's a chance that I may fail, there is no time to rest.

Wide awake, in the middle of the night,
Trapped in the darkness, with no source of light.

Protecting ourselves from a virus that's killing people every day,
Locked inside, wearing masks, praying that it will go away.

Fear.

by Khushla Dooboree (11 years old)
Oakville, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

The World of Spring

Once snow becomes petals
And icy dirt becomes grass
When the freezing cold devils
Evaporate from window glass

This is when you know
That springtime is truly here
The flowers that earth bestows
Can only make spring endear

Sakura flowers blooming
From the dark branches of the north
Each soft pink scale unassuming
This is what Gaea brings forth

Dancing daffodils in the wind
Gossamer dandelion seeds
Colourful tulips lined
In a field, like prayer beads

Voluminous clouds floating upwards
Sometimes clearing the way
For complete domes of blue worlds
Perfectly smooth like sculpted clay

Too soon after spring
Will come the sizzling month of June
When ice-cream trucks go *ding*
And it's time to slow down at noon

But before the days stretch long
Before the nights fade into evening
And the sun stays up, headstrong
And the moon cannot do its starry weaving

There's the grassy scent of spring
The fragrance of petals
The sound of a golf club's downswing
As the twinkling laughter settles

There's the whirl of bicycle pedals
Cool wet sand between your toes
The splash of skipping pebbles
And the sound of fun with no woes

by Jiyan Jane Fan (11 years old)
Vancouver, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Being in Charge

I woke up in the morning
My parents were droning
They said, "You're in charge"
And my chest grew large

I served them gruel
I soon told them a rule
They yelled and yelled and stomped around
(They almost flattened me to the ground)

I told them to stop
And they sat with a flop
They ate and ate
And forgot about hate

They soon broke the rule
And I fought them in a duel
Their swords they drew
As I jabbed and flew

We fought for days
(And in many ways)
We fought with judo and kung fu
(We even fought using voodoo)

I finally beat them, and then they slept
And now, as I write, peace is kept

by Isaiah Chao (10 years old)
Vancouver, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

My Hippo

I have a hippopotamus
And yes, I like him too
We play around most every day
And only sometimes argue

We both like taking mud baths
And chilling in the sun
And well, sometimes when we're hungry
We eat a sausage in a bun

We sleep in a bunk bed every night
He's always at the top
I'm at the very bottom
Yet I've a feeling that the bed will go *pop!*

But one Sunday morning
Just when I woke up
I could see nothing but darkness
'Cause my hippo ate me up!

by Sean Miltchman (9 years old)
Waterloo, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Chai

Dedicated to Sage from Sundance Ranch in Ashcroft, BC.

Chai is a place where old horses go
Where they run in the beautiful meadows or snow
Their hard work is all done
They can take a break and have fun.

When their time is up, they have to go.
They say goodbye to all the horses they know.
They have finished playing in the grass,
But the memories they leave will always last.

by Annabel Deyell (7 years old)
Vancouver, British Columbia

FIRST PRIZE

Broken Promises

THE TRAIN STATION WAS OVERCROWDED, as usual. The overlapping noises that echoed throughout the building were frightening for a young boy.

Edmond lived with his parents and three younger sisters in a quaint, three-bedroom cottage at the base of the mountains. He grew up at his father's side—hunting, fishing, and caring for the farmland and animals. From a young age, Edmond was lean and strong and had learned the value in hard work and simplicity.

But fate decided to shake things up.

A man in a uniform had come to the door and engaged in a lengthy conversation with Edmond's parents. While his sisters played on the porch, Edmond had snuck back inside to eavesdrop. He hadn't understood the snippets of the dialogue he had overheard, something about a man named Hitler and a big war in Germany, but his father's face went stony, and his mother looked incredibly anxious. Her soft face had twisted into hard lines, and she wrung her hands incessantly.

And now they were at the train station, and Edmond's father was wearing the same strange uniform as the man who'd come to their door.

His father knelt down. "I need you to promise that you'll protect my girls, Eddy."

"But aren't you coming back?"

"Of course I am, Son, but . . . it might be a while before I do. It's my responsibility to protect my country, and it will probably take some time for the war to end. Do you understand?"

"Not really."

"You will, in time. Here," Edmond's father said, handing him a hand-carved wooden horse, "keep this with you. It will help you to be strong and brave for your mother and sisters until I come home."

Edmond ran his shaking fingers over the smooth wooden surface. "Da, do you promise you'll come back?"

"I promise." The train's whistle blasted impatiently, and Edmond's father stood. He wore a weary expression on his face as he patted each of his children on the head and kissed his wife goodbye. Then he turned and disappeared into the belly of the train.

Three years later, Edmond still did not understand.

The wooden horse lay on his windowsill, but he found that upon looking at it, the only feelings that filled Edmond's heart were anger and distress. He was thirteen years old now, but he no longer felt like a child. His hands were calloused from the extra farm responsibilities he'd shouldered, and he'd surpassed his mother's height during a recent growth spurt. Yet still his father did not return home.

Every day that the war raged on seemed to turn Edmond's mother greyer and frailer, and he often caught her staring at the door while hope and despair warred in her heart. At her insistence, Edmond and his sisters would sit and scribble letters for "Da" once a week. She would then give them to another uniformed man, who slipped them in his bag and left with the same words tumbling out of his mouth each week: "Don't worry; I'll make sure these letters get where they need to go."

But when the mailman suddenly stopped bringing letters from Edmond's father, Edmond had watched, helpless, as his mother slowly sank into a deep depression. She was often weary and hardly ever smiled anymore. The war had made her a cold, hard shell.

This was why, when the man in the green uniform approached the door again, Edmond knew his father was dead.

Another private conversation ensued, but Edmond didn't eavesdrop this time. Instead, he stared and stared at the little horse on the windowsill. When the man left, Edmond watched his mother crumple to the floor and succumb to the emotions that had plagued her for the last three years. He clenched the horse in his fist, his anger surfacing at last.

How dare his father leave and not return? How could he assume that everything would just be okay if he broke his promise?

Edmond's vision went blurry as tears trailed down his face. He turned towards his mother, who still sobbed uncontrollably, and felt resolve begin to replace his fury.

He would not carelessly abandon his family.

He would not leave his mother and sisters alone.

He would keep his promises, and always come back.

With those vows weighing heavily in his mind, Edmond glared once more at the horse his father had carved, then threw it into the wood-burning stove and walked away without a backward glance.

by Alyssa Thomson (15 years old)
Magrath, Alberta

SECOND PRIZE

My Brother's Bicycle

MY BROTHER IS A GOOD PERSON, no matter what anyone says.

He never had a lot, and he didn't smile enough, but that didn't stop him from trying to make sure I never would be as sullen as he was. At seven years old, I was a positive ray of sunshine until the very first day of school.

"Your clothes are boy clothes," the little girls there pointed out to me, snickering at my hand-me-down outfit, which I had been proud of up until then. They told me my shoes were scruffy, my backpack old, and my hair—did I have no mother to properly tie up my hair? Worst of all, they laughed that I had to walk to school, for the fashionable way back then was by bicycle.

"I want one of those, Ty," I said miserably to my brother, as I watched all of the other kids jump on their beautiful, shiny bikes and ride on home with the wind in their hair.

Ty was quiet. "Really?" he said, after a moment.

"Yeah. Really."

There was a long pause, and then Ty said, "All right. I'll build you one."

"Build me one?" I said in surprise, then turned to look at him. "Promise?"

He glanced down at me. Maybe it was the word "promise." Had he ever been promised anything? When he was born, he had been promised a happy family. Instead, he got a dead mother and an incompetent father. No one had ever made and kept a promise to him.

And maybe that was why he looked me squarely in the eye and said, "Promise."

HE BEGAN TO BUILD the bicycle. He borrowed tools from friends, searched through junkyards—determined to give me this one thing.

He told me I had to keep attending school until he was through. I asked what about him, wasn't he going to attend school? He said sure. But I don't think he did, for I remember one night my father lazily yelling at him from the kitchen table, telling him the school had called about his absence for the second week in a row.

But Ty didn't care. Ty was going to keep his promise.

"I got to ride Katie's bicycle at school yesterday," I told him airily one day while he patched up an old, hole-ridden tire. "It made me feel really free. As if I could go anywhere and do anything."

Ty didn't say anything but began to work even more feverishly, a look of determination on his face.

It was towards the end of February that he finally got all the pieces in place. Daddy made him go back to school before that, and I noticed that he often came back with bruises and cuts on his face and arms. He refused to talk about it, and I didn't think much of it until the giver of those injuries, a boy named Sam Carcetan, snuck into our garage one night and smashed up the bicycle Ty had worked so hard on, just before it was finished.

I cried my heart out on Ty's shoulder when he told me what had happened. He was crying, too, though I didn't see it.

"I'm sorry, Ryleigh," he said thickly as he hugged me. "I'm really sorry."

IT WAS LESS THAN A WEEK LATER when a man came to our house on the weekend to see Daddy, who stumbled groggily to the door. The man told him that Ty had been expelled for beating up Sam on the school basketball court the day before.

Ty and Daddy had an awful fight. I tried to stop them, but Daddy said this had nothing to do with me and locked me in the bathroom until he and Ty were done. He finally let me out, only for me to see Ty grabbing his stuff from his room, giving me one last, unreadable look before storming out.

SEPTEMBER ROLLED AROUND with the autumn breeze, and I was dreading the return of school. I still had no bicycle, though it didn't seem to matter so much with Ty gone.

The morning of the first day of school, I was awoken by the doorbell. Groggily, I stumbled to the front and saw a package there. I ripped it open curiously, and my breath caught in my throat.

I could almost hear Ty's voice as his promise sat in front of me in the form of a beautiful, blue bicycle, and I smiled.

by Madison Watai (15 years old)
Calgary, Alberta

THIRD PRIZE

Decisions

EVERYTHING WAS CHANGING, and it was all happening so quickly. Just yesterday, Harmony had been saying how things at school had been too dull for too long, and suddenly, everyone was talking about what had happened. The whole school had been going crazy since the fire alarm had been pulled during the school assembly, and everything had gone downhill since her best friend, Aliyah, had told her she'd done it.

Harmony was distraught. She didn't know what to do! She couldn't keep a secret, everyone knew it, but Aliyah had made her promise not to tell anyone, and she'd promised her best friend she wouldn't.

On the other hand, she could get in big trouble if the school found out she had known all along. She didn't want that. But she remembered the panic she, and everyone else around her, had felt after the alarm had been pulled. Everyone knew it wasn't a drill—why would the teachers set a fire drill in the middle of a school assembly?—and that had only left one possible reason for the fire alarm to go off: there was a fire.

They had all been so relieved to hear there had been no such fire, but now everyone wanted to know who had interrupted the assembly and forced them to stand outside for almost an hour in the freezing cold Ontario winter, and with no coats at that!

There were so many sides to this argument, so many people to consider. Should she tell the principal? Should she keep this to herself? How could she be sure when either way could affect people in such big ways?

If she were to tell the principal, a lot of the student body would be mad at Aliyah, and that would not be good for her friend. And, on top of that, Aliyah would risk expulsion.

On the other hand, if she didn't tell, she could get in serious trouble. And, on top of that, she might get shunned by all of her classmates if they found out she had known about Aliyah and not told any of them.

But on the third hand—yes, Harmony knew nobody had three hands, but there were just too many things to consider counting on just two—if she told, Aliyah might never talk to her again. And, if she didn't have Aliyah, she had no one. No friends.

On the fourth hand—again, she knew about how many hands the human body had, thank you very much—she really wanted to do well in school. She was a good kid, and she didn't want any black spots on her record,

But on the fifth hand—too many hands, too many options, choices, decisions—all of the kids in her class might hate her anyway if she betrayed her best friend.

On the sixth hand . . . no. She wouldn't think any more about this now. She would decide tomorrow, or the next day, or maybe sometime in the near future, but not right now.

THE NEXT MORNING, Harmony walked to school alone. Aliyah was at her mom's house, and her mom always drove her to school. Harmony had no one to talk to, so she thought about the choice she would have to make.

By the time they reached school, Harmony had decided not to tell. She wouldn't betray her best friend. But when she walked through the front doors of the school, her legs took her to the principal's office of their own accord. Apparently, her legs didn't care much about betraying friends.

Harmony walked through the doors of the office and asked if she could see the principal. The woman sitting at the administrator's desk looked a little surprised—Harmony supposed that kids didn't come looking for the principal that often—but called and asked if Harmony could go in. The woman hung up the phone and waved her into the office.

Harmony sat down and immediately told the principal everything. When she was done, the principal smiled at her and said Harmony had been brave by coming forward with this, but Harmony didn't feel very brave. She felt as if she had done the cowardly thing by coming here. Oh, how Aliyah would hate her!

The principal reached across her desk and grabbed the microphone that connected to the PA system. The principal turned on the microphone and said, "Could Aliyah Shaw please come down to the office?"

Harmony could feel herself sinking lower in her chair.

by Meredith Holloway (13 years old)
Collingwood, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Immortal and the Time Traveller

THIS BLOKE AGAIN. Across the street was a man who seemed to pop up in my life every so often. Dressed in a cheaply made jacket, his fashion was passable but not precisely with the trend. By my standards, a sloppy immortal. Whenever I saw him, something strange always seemed to happen. I quickly started moving not wanting to interact. Unfortunately, I was too slow.

He spotted me and made his way across the street. Not wanting to cause a scene, I turned to face him.

“Hello, Ana.” He extended his hand to me.

I took his hand and shook it. “Christopher.”

“Walk with me, will you?” He offered his arm to me; I took it without protest.

“Whatever are you doing in England?” I asked.

“Looking for you,” he stated with a smile. “I was hoping you’d join me on a trip.”

Though I did not want to be on another one of his adventures, my curiosity got the best of me. “And where might this trip be to?”

“Paris, of course! The Eiffel Tower is finishing soon, and I want to see the final piece placed.”

I had heard of a great tower going up in Paris, though I had no idea how he knew when it was finishing. Wherever I met him, he always seemed to know where to be to see something happening. Our journeys had led to seeing Emperor Caesar being stabbed—that was not enjoyable; the opening of a lovely church called Notre Dame; and when I was in the colonies for a while, he got me to witness women being tried for witchcraft. I did not believe these women to be guilty. Christopher even lost his temper and shouted at the men for how ridiculous they were being. Our adventures were too numerous to recall. I had been in England for a while and was planning to move soon, so perhaps a temporary trip to Paris would be good.

“You know what, Christopher, I will take you up on that offer. When do we leave?”

Christopher smiled wider. “If we are to make it on time, we leave today. How do you not know that?”

Ignoring the strange question, I told him I must gather my things. He said he’d meet me at the train station with our tickets to the coast.

A few hours later, Christopher and I were in a sitting car chatting away.

“So, tell me, Ana, how’s life been?”

“How many times have I told you not to call me Ana?” Christopher laughed. “My name is Anastasia.”

“Okay, Grand Duchess Anastasia of Russia,” he said mockingly and did a little bow.

Confused, I asked, “Who?”

“Who? You seriously don’t know who that is?” he said as if I should know who that was.

I shook my head in response.

He looked as if he were about to say something but then just shook his head as well. “Never mind.”

A few days later, I stood looking at the newly built tower with Christopher at my side. He had a look of awe on his face.

“Can you believe it, Ana? We are the first tourists to see the fully built Eiffel Tower.”

As much as I hated to admit it, I had grown to like that nickname with the thousands of years he’d popped in and out of my life. Dare I ask the question I’d been wondering since I met him.

“Christopher, how do you know when all these events are happening? It’s almost as if you can see the future.”

He furrowed his brow in confusion. “I don’t need to see the future. I know it, like you.”

“I don’t know what the future holds, nobody does.”

“Ana, what do you mean? You are from the future, like me.”

“I’m not from the future,” I answered.

He turned to me and shook his head, “But if you’re not from the future, how have you been alive all this time?”

“I’m immortal. Are you saying you’re from the future?”

“Yes,” he shouted. “I’m a time traveller. I’ve been coming back to see major historical events; that’s what I assumed you were doing!”

The realization hit me like a horse. *All this time, Christopher knew about these events because he was coming to see them. In some distant future, he had somehow figured out how to come back.* “Well, I guess we have a lot to talk about.”

Christopher met my eyes and smiled, “I guess we do.”

by Emma Nowak (15 years old)
Kitchener, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Stewed Plums and Custard

IT WAS A LATE SUNDAY EVENING when the Shipton family sat down to eat their small, rationed portion of food. It had taken Mrs. Shipton a week to get even a couple of eggs. So, you can imagine how tasty their meals must've been. Tonight wasn't an ordinary dinner night, however; Mrs. Shipton had told the children that they would be having stewed plums and custard for dessert.

Mrs. Shipton had gotten their one packet of custard for the month, and they had grown the plums themselves on their small plum tree in the garden. Thanks to the war, their garden was mainly just a patch of grass now. Their fence had been taken and donated as scrap metal to make weapons. They used the grass purely for growing vegetables, as the government had told them to "dig for Britain."

The four children were eager to finish their meals and get to the rare occasion that was dessert. Paul, the youngest of the four, managed to finish his meal quickly. Meanwhile, the three girls—Sandra, Celia, and Carol—had taken a little longer. The meal this night was especially gruesome as it was a new menu item named "economy loaf," which was just a nicer way of saying mashed-up vegetables and eggs in loaf form. It took Carol what seemed like ages to manage to swallow the slimy dinner substitute. Her siblings were rushing her as they weren't "allowed to move to the dessert until everyone's finished!" Or at least that is what Mrs. Shipton said. Eventually, Carol managed to choke down the last of the loaf, much to her desperate siblings' excitement.

"Sandra, could you help me gather the bowls for the custard and plums?" Mrs. Shipton asked with a knowing smile. All three of the younger children instantly jumped up.

"I will!" said little Paul.

"You know what you can do," said Carol, the oldest and definitely the most devious of the bunch, "you can clear up the plates. I'm sure that will get you an extra scooping of custard." She watched as Paul's eyes lit up. Carol's eyes lit up, too, knowing that this was *her* chore and that Paul would not be able to get any more custard for doing it, as there was barely enough to go around.

"Carol Shipton, you stop messing with your brother and do your job!" Mr. Shipton yelled. Carol rolled her eyes, not to her father though; she didn't want the belt. It was too late, though; Paul had been fooled, and the dishes had been taken to the sink. Mrs. Shipton came out of the kitchen carrying four bowls.

"Carol, would you mind serving yourself?" Mrs. Shipton asked. Carol nodded, heading into the kitchen. Hopefully, this meant she could lick the spoon from the pan as well.

She poured the remnants of the pan into a small bowl and grabbed a spoon. She took a deep breath of the warm sweet smell before—

A terrible sound boomed over the house. Carol heard the rest of her family grabbing their gas masks to head to the bomb shelter in the middle of her street. The bomb alarm had gone off! The Germans were flying close by! Carol was in a panic. She grabbed her custard and plums and ran quickly to hide in the cupboard under her stairs. She sat under the stairs and ate her dessert as quietly as possible.

Carol was anxiously huddled in the cupboard when she heard the front door open. She froze. The Germans were here. She got up to run, but, in her fear, she spilled the bowl all over herself. The bowl clattered to the floor, shattering beneath her feet. The fast-paced footsteps she had previously heard slowed, and she felt as if she couldn't breathe. The footsteps neared when suddenly, the cupboard door swung open to reveal Mrs. Shipton, looking a worrisome mess. Carol nearly burst into tears of relief as her mother hugged her tightly.

"We must get to the shelter," she warned. Carol nodded nervously. "Carol— What is all over your dress?" Mrs. Shipton looked in horror at the shattered bowl and custard that was everywhere. Carol grimaced, expecting to be yelled at, but Mrs. Shipton laughed. "You stayed here to eat your custard?" Carol smiled innocently and grabbed her mother's hand. Together, they ran down the street to the bomb shelter and waited for the German planes to pass.

by Emma Hawley (14 years old)
Kitchener, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Spider

THE FLICKER OF MOVEMENT under my feet has me frozen in an instant. I twist towards it, the sharp tang of fear coating my tongue. I swallow past the lump in my throat as I see the spider crouched on the floor a foot away from where I sit—despite its tiny size, it feels suffocating, huge, and ominous.

I lock my eyes on it and inch backwards, reaching one hand behind me to grasp a tissue and tuck it around my fist like a glove. Reluctantly, I stretch out my arm towards the arachnid.

And stop. My heart hammers in my rib cage as I crouch there, poised on my tiptoes, ready to seize the spider.

It's right there, I chide myself. Just lean forwards and snatch it before it moves away. I take a deep breath, steeling my nerves against the growing kernel of fear.

"Okay," I mutter as sweat beads on my upper lip. "Don't panic. It's more afraid of you than you are of it." The mantra does nothing to reassure me, and I remain in the awkward position, staring at the spider.

I press against my mental restraints, forcing my hand an inch closer to the spider. It scuttles away from my movement, and I launch backwards with a yelp, landing in a heap a few feet away.

Scowling despite the high colour on my face, I uncoil to my feet. Clutching my tissue, my hand trembling, I turn back towards it.

Except the spider isn't there anymore.

I start to panic, whipping my head around to try and spot the little menace before it slips into the shadows. My head ringing with alarm, I scan the room once more, but there's nothing to suggest the presence of the spider.

After minutes of desperate searching, I decide that the spider must have escaped somehow.

As I turn to discard the tissue, still flush with unease, I see it—creeping up my bedspread and making itself comfortable between my pillows. My heart plummets. Wringing out my last ounce of courage, I shift the cushions apart, craning my neck downwards to see more clearly.

The spider squats in the seam where the pillow meets the mattress, a blot of darkness among the fabric. I brandish the cup and tissue and prepare to capture it, and a surge of fear washes over me again.

My breathing comes in ragged gasps as tears form in my eyes. The frustration at myself for failing this simple task is overwhelming. I desperately want someone to help me, but there's no one there—I feel vulnerable, threatened, and terrified by this creature. In my mind's eye, I can feel the spider's fangs burrowing into my flesh, its eight legs digging into my skin.

How can something so small cause me so much fear? That thought makes me pause, a reprieve against the buffeting waves of terror. How is it possible that something so tiny can cause such fear?

Swiping away my unshed tears, I force myself to look at the spider—not through the lens of dread but of observation. I focus on its anatomy, trailing my gaze from one end of the arachnid to the other. Its alien-like abdomen and multitude of legs make a shiver skitter down my spine, but I continue watching through my blurred vision.

The spider lifts its front leg and extends it with a fluidity that makes me cringe. It walks with a lilt up the wall to the corner of my ceiling, its legs moving without rhythm, before starting the beginnings of a web. It uses its back legs to regulate the length of the silk, lashing it together to create impeccable latticework. I spend several minutes staring up at it, marvelling at its abilities.

The spider isn't what scares me. The idea of the spider, of what might happen, creates the fear. The lack of control when dealing with forces outside myself terrifies me. I truly have no idea how anything will turn out. But acting despite the uncertainty, weathering its battering force, is something I can control. Accepting fear as fuel for greatness creates much more potential than cringing away. The actions never get easier—we get stronger. Choosing to confront our fears and insecurities will always be greater than bowing to terror.

Taking a deep breath, I raise the tissue one last time.

by Kaitlyn Stevens (14 years old)
Mono, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Of Flowers and Fog

ADAIR STARED AT THE FLOWER with an intensity that could only be described as intimidating. She wasn't angry at the flower, of course—that would have been absurd—but rather at its state.

Today, as always, Adair woke to dead flowers. She should've been used to it by now—she had, after all, woken to the same scene every day since she'd made her way to the room—but she somehow never was. The rush of sadness came just as it had on other days, crushing Adair's chest almost as soon as she woke and only magnifying as she breathed in the stale, rotting smell of the room.

Adair had never had the heart to acknowledge the room as her own—that would mean simultaneously acknowledging the horrid situation she'd gotten herself into, and, even worse, the fact that said situation would be hers for many centuries to come.

So instead of claiming it, Adair chose to hate the room. She hated its grey walls and its creaky wooden floor and how cruelly cold it was during the winter; she hated its shadows and its whispers and its taunting and its putrid smell of decay.

The flowers, too, hated the room, for it offered them no sun or any means to stay alive. The room gave no food and no water and no breeze and, what the plants thought most terrible of all, no sun.

Adair shared none of the plant's complaints—possibly because she did not need those things, but also, perhaps, because she didn't remember them and could not, therefore, long for them as her flowers did.

Adair had no memories outside from those she'd created in the room. She had never, as strange as it may seem, ever even taken a breath. Well, she must have breathed once, of course, which would explain why she often did it mindlessly, but once is not now, and now, Adair did not need to breathe.

ADAIR HAD NEVER LIKED her name. "Adair" whispered of a girl who longed for wings, a girl who lay in lazy green fields and loved the breeze. "Adair" was not fitting for a ghost who was more shadow than girl, nor for a girl who had not a voice but an echo.

"Adair" was not fitting for a girl who was trapped and confused and lonely and oh-so heavy. So heavy, indeed, that she could barely stand; so heavy, indeed, that her fog of fatigue and sadness dragged her down and onto the floor. The fog, her stupid, heavy fog choked her with grey and shadows and left her with no colour or even a sprinkle of beauty.

Adair had nothing but her flowers, and even those left her when the fog came. Slowly, tenderly, as if the slightest movement could break her, Addison made her way to the flowers.

They were her favourite part of the room, the only beauty in a desert of grey. Each time they died, she felt a prick of guilt; every time she smelled their rot, she let herself a bit more into her void.

It was funny, her disappointment; after all, what flower could live with no sun? It was expected that her flowers would die, just as it was expected that she would bring them back.

Adair put her hands to the flowers and willed the energy around her towards them. She watched as the brown of the flowers turned bright pink, as the air turned from rotten to innocently sweet. Adair knew it was cruel to keep her beloved flowers from ever ceasing their stay in the cold room, but she couldn't bear to be left alone in her world of shadows and grey.

Adair didn't have much to laugh about in the room, but the irony of a dead girl giving others life always brought a faint smile to her face. She didn't know how she could do what she did, or why she always felt so drained after, but she didn't really want to know. Adair was content among her flowers, and that was enough for her.

She couldn't have known that she was killing herself—who would have thought one could die twice? But she was, and today, she had used too much of her energy to survive the occasion.

It was then that she saw a window, saw the sun streaking through the dust. It was then that Adair, eyes wide with wonder, reached for the window's handle.

by Aiko Mejias Nishimura (13 years old)
Vancouver, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Grandma versus Squirrel

GRANDMA WAS MAD. She was angry. Furious. Enraged. Altogether, she was in a foul mood.

Surprisingly, it all stemmed from a squirrel. Light and fluffy, it jumped from tree branch to tree branch, springing on its hind legs to constantly reach the delicate bird feeder.

As Grandma and I watched through the window, it did that now. The rust-red squirrel leapt elegantly across the outrageously long expanse between the apple tree and the bird feeder. When it touched down, it scared off the beautiful and vibrant cardinal that we had been watching.

“Oh, why did it have to do that?” Grandma complained, setting her hot tea down on a coaster.

“It wants to eat, of course,” I replied, keeping my eyes locked on the squirrel, which was devouring the sunflower seeds set out for the birds.

“It can eat somewhere else, Jasmine! That’s it,” she sighed, “it has to go.”

“Don’t kill it, Grandma. It’s so cute and fluffy.”

“I won’t kill it, of course. I will simply . . . remove it.”

“But how, Grandma?” I prodded carefully.

“I STILL DON’T GET IT,” I said.

“Oh, it’s simple. Our speedy friend smells the peanut butter, at which point it goes under the cage to eat it. The cage falls on our friend, trapping it.”

“I thought you didn’t like it, so why call it friend?”

The old lady frowned. “What a silly question, Jasmine.”

I was still pondering this when Grandma led me back up to the porch to watch and wait for the results. And it didn’t take long.

The rust-red squirrel’s wet nose could be seen poking out of the apple tree’s thick foliage. The nose gleamed in the sunlight and twitched back and forth to catch another whiff of the peanut butter. Once it did, the squirrel crept farther out on the branch it was perched on until its bushy tail was also visible.

Spotting the source of the scent, it hopped to the ground and landed lightly on the soft green grass. Slowly, it crept towards the trap, until it stood just outside of it.

“Yes, yes. Go in, little animal. Eat that tasty meal,” muttered Grandma.

As if hearing the voice, the squirrel covered that last foot of land to the peanut butter. Seconds after its tail cleared the border, the cage fell down on the unsuspecting creature.

There was a flurry of action as the animal bolted over each side of the enclosure to find a way out. When it failed to discover one, it crouched and slowly turned in circles in an effort to see all directions at once.

Grandma eased out of her chair and skipped down the porch steps like a child on Christmas morning. She danced across the soft green lawn and looked down at the rust-red squirrel. The squirrel, for its part, stared back at her with vigilant black eyes, as alert as eyes could go.

“What are you going to do with it?” I wondered aloud.

“You’ll see, Jasmine. Now, pick up the cage, will you? I’ll start up the car.”

“The car, Grandma?”

“Yes, Jasmine,” she snapped. “The car. Now fetch the cage.”

While the old lady shuffled off, I found the cage’s handle and hefted it up. I lugged it to the blue Honda that Grandma had started up. I swung the back door open and pushed the cage onto the middle seat, following it and shutting the door behind us.

“Seatbelt?”

“Yes, Grandma.”

And with that, the car pulled out of the driveway and sped off. The suburbs soon turned into rural roads, with golden fields of wheat and enormous cows speeding by.

At a seemingly random moment, Grandma pulled over to the side of the road and carried the cage to the very edge of the pavement. Placing the opening for the enclosure away from the road, the old lady pulled open the door.

As soon as there was enough room to squeeze out, the squirrel was off and away into the countryside in the flash of red.

“And there you go, Jasmine!” Grandma said in a pleased voice. She led the way back to the car, and we drove home in an uninteresting silence.

As we went to the porch to enjoy some cold lemonade, something red caught my attention. I turned my head to see, but it was no longer visible. Oh, there it was again! It was rust-red and was on the branch that granted easy access to the bird feeder.

by Megan Strachan (13 years old)
Ottawa, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Afterlife

“JACOB!” SHE SAID, GIGGLING. “What are you doing?” He was twirling her under the cherry blossom trees, causing her light-pink skirt to fly up underneath her and cherry blossom flowers to land on her.

“I’m twirling you, my love,” he said, smiling that crooked smile of his as the daylight landed on his face. He seemed happy—happier than usual.

“Why are you so happy today?” she asked. His smile was so contagious, she smiled too. He set her down and began to dance with her.

“I’m happy because we survived,” he replied, then he brought his hands around her shoulders, and they began swaying.

“What did we survive?” she said, confused.

“The nuclear apocalypse.”

Her smile faded. “When did that happen? How did we survive?” It felt as if all of her memories were draining out of her head.

“It happened two years ago.”

She nodded. “Yes, but how did we survive?”

“We didn’t.”

Then, the hill with all the cherry blossom trees was covered with black smoke. All she could see was Jacob’s face. “I’m sorry, my love.” Then, Jacob let go of her and disappeared. She fell down the hill, and the black smoke engulfed her.

KYLIE AWOKE IN HER BED in the bunker drenched in sweat. It felt as if she had taken a shower but in sweat. She wiped the sweat off with her sleeping bag. Today, they would finally break out of this glorified prison.

She quietly tiptoed through the dark bunker room that she shared with her friends and went to the bathroom. The walls of the bathroom were metal, along with everything else. There was no more soap in the very small shower (it could barely fit Cleo, despite her being the shortest of the group of fifteen-year-olds), and the toilet looked and smelled as if something had died in it. The only good thing about the bathroom was the wardrobe of clothes.

She changed into a plain white shirt and jeans, the same outfit she had been wearing every day for the past two years. She tied her hair in a ponytail then leaned against the wall to ponder her dream: *Lately, I have been having dreams where things seem real and fun, but then I die somehow—*

Her thoughts were interrupted when Cleo pounded on the door. “Kylie! If you’re going to stay in there forever, then I’m going to knock down this door.” She must have drunk her usual three bottles of water.

“I’m coming out now,” she deadpanned.

Kylie opened the door to meet an angry Cleo, whose jet-black hair was in a high ponytail, but she was still in her pink bunny pyjamas. As soon as she saw Kylie, she pushed her out of the way and ran into the bathroom.

Everyone else was awake and seemed to be dressed and ready. “Look who’s awake,” Alex said, not looking up from his hover phone but still pushing a lock of black hair out of his face.

May and Jason were sitting in the corner, having a speed-reading contest. “I win!” She threw her arms up in the air, and the book flew across the room and hit an oblivious Jacob who was busy ogling Kylie.

“May, we must be quiet. It’s still early,” Jason said.

“You’re just mad ‘cause you lost,” she retorted. Jason flushed and pushed his glasses onto the bridge of his nose.

“Guys!” Kylie shouted. “We’re going outside of the bunker today, remember?” All of them went quiet, and May exited the bathroom wearing a plaid skirt and plain white top.

“I remember,” May said. “Let’s go now. We’re all ready.”

Kylie slapped her face. “That’s what I was saying.”

Alexander put his hover phone down. “I’m ready to go.”

It was dark in the metal hallways of the bunker, and they had to tiptoe to make sure they didn’t make noise on the metal floors. They had stolen an access card earlier and opened the door with that.

They all went out the door and travelled for miles into the forest around them. Suddenly, everyone except Kylie fell over. Smoke was trapping her. So, she ran.

She reached a tall hill and settled on the top. She saw nuclear signs all over and realized her mistake. She had led them all to their deaths. Tears ran down her face as smoke climbed up the hill. Kylie took one last deep breath and pictured herself in her dream. Then, she stepped into the afterlife.

by Amelia Stang (12 years old)
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

HONOURABLE MENTION

Turning the Tide

THE RUFFLE OF THE MORNING BREEZE, the squawking of the seagulls, and the lashing of the ocean waves travelled through the air and drifted through Laura's open window and into her room. This morning melody gently woke Laura up every summer morning. By the time the sun had crept up above the horizon, Laura had already waded knee-deep into the sea water.

She liked to be by the sea, where she would collect seashells and have time alone. The crashing waves would blur out the bustle of traffic, letting her imagination drift. She often would walk back and forth by the seashore for hours, deeply entrenched in thought. Things were not great right then. Her mom had recently passed away, leaving her dad to raise her alone. Her dad ran a fishing company and rarely had time to care for her or to spend time with her, even before her mother had died. To make matters worse, her dad's company had been charged with illegal fishing of salmon, even though they had never fished salmon. She knew he had done nothing wrong, and yet somehow, she felt angry with him.

All these occurrences happening at the same time was too much for Laura to handle. This was why she would come out to the beach. While absent-mindedly digging for seashells, she would be daydreaming. In her daydreams, her mother would still be alive, her father would not be charged, and they would both spend time with her. These dreams took her far away, even if only for short moments.

This morning, however, these thoughts were interrupted, for while gazing into the open water, something floating in the waves caught her eye. It was silver metal, basking in the sunlight. Unfortunately, this metal was too far for her to grab. She waited for a few minutes to see if it would wash up on the shore, but every time it was almost in reach, it would then seem to go against the waves and float back out. Finally, Laura could wait no longer. She dove headfirst into the water. The saltiness of seawater, a familiar friend, did not bother her.

A moment later, it was within arm's reach, and she snatched it out of the water. In her hands, it felt warm, like a slice of freshly baked bread. It appeared to be shining, even radiating some kind of energy. Suddenly it slipped between her fingers, falling back into the water. Laura made another attempt to grasp it, but it dodged out of the way, going deeper into the salty water. She had not brought goggles, but she had brought determination. With a boost of confidence, she went after it. This metal got more and more irritating as it fell deeper and deeper into the water. Laura was a very good swimmer, and despite the metal's head start, she seemed to be gaining on it.

Alas, metal doesn't have lungs, but humans do. Laura's chest started to throb in protest, and her legs started to tire from the swimming. On top of that, the water had become murky to the point where her only way of keeping direction was following the shining metal. Just when she thought she might have to let it go, the water below her lit up, as though a fire within the metal had been ignited. She lunged ahead and clutched it again between her fingers and looked at the light as she turned to rise to the surface. She saw a silhouette glimmering back at her. The changing image started to get brighter, and brighter still, until it seemed to explode with radiance.

Once almost at the surface, she thought she saw herself—and yet not herself. Squinting against the light, her eyes darted around the image. She did see herself, but she seemed older, wiser, calmer. In her eyes, she saw compassion, grief, perseverance.

The air was warm as Laura found herself back on the beach. She hugged her knees, watching the waves caress the shore. She turned to think about her dad. Laura missed him and hoped he was back. She looked towards the house. The sun seemed brighter, the air fresher, the sand beneath her softer. She breathed gently. A sweet scent washed over her, a scent she had been missing for a very long time: her father's cooking. She rose and turned towards home.

by *Quentin Li* (11 years old)
Toronto, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Beyond the Pages

HALBERT ZIMMERMAN WAS NOT VERY ATHLETIC and had a pair of thick glasses on his nose. He spent most of his time inside his own room, in augmented reality, learning things or playing games. This morning, Halbert sat up in his bed and checked the date: January 28, 3020. He put on his suit that automatically adjusted to what he wanted to wear.

Halbert flicked a switch, and his room immediately turned into a virtual classroom. Most of his classmates were already there. The teacher talked about a material called “paper” and an object named “book.” The teacher explained that paper was made of a substance called wood. To make paper into a book, people wrote on it. Writing was an action of moving your hand. Halbert found this interesting because he had never heard the term “writing” before. Whenever he had to “write” something, all he had to do was think about it.

After class, Halbert went outside to walk. It was the first time in months he had gone outside. He was moving around with a mini jetpack. He strayed off his normal path and found a deep hole. He stretched his arm and felt something hard. He picked up the rectangular object, made of a weird material. It had an inky smell. Its cover felt rough and worn out, but the leather still felt good in his hands. Even though he had never seen anything like this, his instincts told him that it must have been what the teacher was talking about—a book! A book from a century ago, and it must have contained a world of wonders and piles of information.

Halbert asked the computer to transfer all the information into his brain. He was in awe as he saw the lush green fields the book described and the cute animals. It talked about cities made of candies and lands of horror. It talked about elves with pointy ears and gnomes with spiky hats. It talked about how a brave prince fought a dragon and about people falling in love. It described his current city as if it were a paradise in a distant dream. The story ended abruptly. The computer told him that the book had been ripped in half.

Halbert decided to go beyond where he normally resides and find the paradise in the book. The jetpack immediately rushed forward at full speed while avoiding all the obstacles. He soon exited the town made of futuristic materials and blue lights and dashed into the yellowish fields of dead grass and trees. He murmured, “This is not how the book described the world to be, which means I still haven’t found the ‘outside’ yet.”

The mini jetpack suddenly stopped and almost ripped Halbert’s arms out of their sockets. This was weird because unless there was a wall in front of him, the jetpack should not have stopped. He took off his jetpack and immediately fell over. Halbert’s bones had become so weak they could not support his body. He crawled forward and bumped into what seemed to be a wall. He found a crack in it with a handle in the wall. He tried to hold on to it to help him stand, but the handle turned, and a hole appeared in the skyline. He realized that the grassy plains and the sky that he saw every day were all projections, created by computers. He crawled back through the crack.

What he saw was something ghastly—piles of trash, fossils of creatures, and not a single blade of grass or even a dead leaf. There was waste everywhere as far as the eye could see. The cruel sight of bones and the dreadful piles of trash haunted Halbert’s vision. He saw the dome was just layers of concrete while the sky above seemed to be pitch black as if it were filled with smoke. The thunder sounded as if the sky were pleading for help, asking someone to make the wasteland vanish.

Halbert found the other half of the book among a pile of trash. It continued, “Humans destroyed the planet and filled it with waste by 2050. Only a few of us *Homo sapiens* survived and had to live in a protected dome.” Halbert realized there was nothing beyond these pages—the glistening waterfalls, the grassy fields, and tropical trees only remained on paper. The beautiful landscapes no longer existed but had been replaced with mountains of waste and pollutants.

by *Daniel Zha* (10 years old)
North York, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Mission: Projector

A LONG TIME AGO, there was a teacher whose name was Charlie. One day, in the middle of his chemistry class, his most beloved projector broke down, made a gurgling noise, and then went up in flames. It was a big deal as the fire alarm went off and the school was evacuated.

After days of uncontrollable weeping, while surfing the internet, he saw a Boxing Day sale for the IZOD Virtual Galaxy projector. "What? Seventy percent off! Are you kidding me? I have to go!" Charlie exclaimed.

The next day, on Boxing Day, he sped over to the store. He was in dismay as he saw the line stretch out for over eight blocks. As he looked at the first few people in line, however, he noticed that one of them resembled his grandma Beatrice. He darted over to the woman who seemed perplexed as to why this man suddenly approached her.

"Hey, Grandma! Thanks for holding the spot for me!" Charlie acted very excitedly.

"Hey, I'm not your grandma!"

At this point, the people near them in line watched what was happening suspiciously. Secretly, trying not to be seen, he said, "Here, if you let me go in your spot, I'll give you this bracelet covered in diamonds. It was given to me by my sister, and it's incredibly special to me."

The woman answered, "Okay, now get in line already!"

Unfortunately, a person with a dog quite close to Charlie heard what was happening and let his dog loose on Charlie. As the dog lunged at Charlie, he screamed and fell on his back. The dog bit Charlie's arm. Then, the old woman he just saw earlier came over and hit Charlie on the bottom. Charlie fell to the ground once again, holding his injuries. But at that moment, a salesclerk said, "Move forward! Move forward!" Charlie crawled forward four inches then hit his face against the wall that was right beside him, and he fell onto his back, stuck there like a turtle balancing on its shell.

Then, a car drove by, and a guy poked his head out of the window and said, "Stop wasting your time in that line and live life!" Then, he threw an apple that hit Charlie in the head. At that moment, he got called into the store, but he was too injured to move.

Then, the salesclerk said, "Come on over here already! We don't have much time, you know?" Charlie dragged himself to the door.

He looked around and saw the display projector that had a sign on it that read, "Sold out." Charlie was devastated and fainted from his extreme disappointment.

Suddenly, Charlie was awakened by a salesperson who came up to him and said, "Hey, we don't have any more IZODs. But are you looking for a projector? We have these FRAZO Golden Glass projectors, and one of them was just returned an hour ago with an SD card stuck in its side. I noticed that you had been bitten by a dog and beaten by an old woman and struck by an apple on your head. So, from the bottom of my heart, it would be my pleasure to purchase this projector for you! So, what do you think about that offer?"

Suddenly, Charlie's face lit up like a lightbulb. "Yes! I'll take it!" And he happily brought it home.

When he got to his apartment, he immediately turned it on. Suddenly, a message was projected onto the wall. It read, "TO THE WORST COMPANY IN THE WORLD, WHICH DIDN'T LISTEN TO ME, WHICH DROPPED THE BOX AND KICKED IT AND ACCUSED ME OF KICKING IT, I AM RETURNING THIS PROJECTOR FOR ALL OF YOUR RUDENESS. NOW, TURN THIS PROJECTOR OFF!" Charlie turned off the projector, sat down on his couch, and suddenly, with a roar, the projector exploded, activating the alarm system nearby.

The next day, slowly walking back to the store, cradling the remains of the projector, he asked the salesperson if he could exchange the pieces he held for another projector. Charlie noticed that the salesperson was holding an IZOD projector that had just been returned. Without thinking, Charlie threw the remains at the salesperson, grabbed the IZOD box, and shouted, "Thanks for the exchange!"

At home, he held his shaking finger over the power button, sweating profusely. He summoned all of his courage and pushed it. He heard, "Welcome to IZOD, please connect."

"Hooray!" he shouted. "It works!"

by Bradley Lim (9 years old)
Richmond, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Secret Agent

THERE WAS A GIRL who lived in a house with her mom and dad and her little brother, Chris. The girl's name was Clarissa. Clarissa was *very* nice and kind. But when she met a bad guy, trying to take her little brother to be a servant, she turned into a secret agent and fought for her cute, little, baby brother.

“WHERE'S CHRIS?” asked Mom to Clarissa.

“I don't know!” said Clarissa. “I saw a nice man giving a little gift to him.”

Mom and Dad got a bit worried even though Clarissa said that the man was nice. “I'm going to call 9-1-1,” said their dad.

Then Clarissa said, “You don't need to call 9-1-1! I'm a secret agent!” Then Clarissa ripped off her clothes and underneath was her black, cool suit. Then she walked around the village to look for clues.

And then she heard her baby brother scream in fear. Clarissa ran to the place where the sound came from.

When she got close to the place, she heard it again. Then she yelled, “Don't worry, Chris! I'm coming to save you!”

Then she kicked the door open and saw her little brother tied to a chair where she saw the bad guy was about to mind control him. Then Clarissa tripped the bad guy, and he fell to the ground. Then she quickly untied her little brother from the chair, and they both tied up the bad guy.

By then, Mom and Dad had called the police, and the police had arrived. “You're under arrest!” said the police to the bad guy. But they didn't need to say that because the bad guy was already tied up, and he couldn't move. “Who knocked out the bad guy?” asked the police.

“My little brother and I did,” said Clarissa.

“I am a *supa* hero!” said Chris. Then the police took the bad guy to jail.

AT HOME, their mother and father hugged Clarissa and Chris between their scoldings. Then they had a party with a lot of chocolate ice creams!

by *Pristine Ghosh Bhowmick* (5 years old)
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