

FIRST PRIZE

Torn Worlds

WE ARRIVE AT THE HOUSE with our hearts full, our nervous smiles illuminated by the colourful porch lights. My second home, as I've been told to call it. Snow falls down around us, decorating my brother's hair and sticking to the pompom on Mom's hat. As I stand on the welcome mat, my toes almost frozen in my boots, I can't help but feel like this is anything but home.

I flinch as my mother rings the doorbell, remembering the sound of too many times when our neighbours would stop by with food and words of encouragement. They'd take my brother to the park, pat my mother on the back, and try to talk to me about school.

"How's class?" they'd ask. "I heard you did well on your last test?"

Word tends to spread quickly in a small town. *That's where I should be right now*, I think. *My perfect little paradise, biking down the packed streets as people frantically scour the shops for a last-minute present. But I'm here*, I remind myself as the front door swings open.

My brother bounces on his feet beside me, and my mother fights to keep a straight face. I know she doesn't want to leave us, even just for the day. And what kind of kids are we to make her spend Christmas alone?

I sigh. Everything got so complicated all of a sudden; one minute, we were painting over cracks in the walls of our old house, and the next, the paint was gone and the holes were overbearing, splitting us apart inch by inch.

My mother leans over and kisses me on the forehead, brushing my dark curls out of my face and whispering so quietly I only know she's talking by the marks her breath leaves across the air.

"Try to have fun, sweetheart," she says. "I'll be back before you know it."

She hugs my brother tightly then turns to walk back to the car, her boots leaving footprints in the snow. I stare at them, my mind a flurry of unhelpful thoughts. *She's not the first parent to leave you, you know. No*, I think, *she's not*. As I watch her start up the car, I take a deep breath and remind myself of what's important.

I turn around to see Dad waiting with open arms and a grin so wide it could bridge the gap across my torn worlds. *But she'll be the second parent to return*.

"Come here!" Dad says with enthusiasm, "I missed you!"

I run into his arms without a second thought. *I missed you too, Dad. I missed you too*.

by Abigail Todd (Grade Nine)

Westside Secondary School

Orangeville, Ontario

FIRST PRIZE

Remember What Mother Said

MY MOTHER LIKED TO REMIND ME that everything comes and goes in life: the good, the bad, the victories, the defeats, the seasons, the world.

When I was little, she said it for comfort, a way of reminding me that tomorrow would be better. That nothing terrible, such as dropping an ice-cream cone or scraping a knee, lasted.

“Everything passes, Libby,” I remember she told me as she rocked me in her arms one particular night. “Sadness, happiness, nightmares. . . .” She tilted her head at me with raised eyebrows, but I wasn’t looking at her. My face was buried in the colourful scarves that hung from her neck. Through the cloth, the lamplight turned my vision into a field of warm reds, soothing blues, and soft golds, keeping the shadows away. Breathing in the scent of the fabric and taking in the warmth of my mother, I quietly fell asleep.

AS I GREW UP, she continued to remind me. “Everything passes, Libby,” she would tell me when I complained about the weather, school, or dinner I didn’t like.

“So why can’t it pass now?” I whined during an evening of homework. I sullenly stabbed the paper with my pencil, and suddenly, the tip broke, snapping into the air and out of sight. With a scowl, I glanced up at Mother, who was watching me with slight amusement.

“Because—” she began after a slight pause, “you never know what you might regret.” Ruefully, I glanced down at my pencil.

After a moment, Mother smiled and handed me a pencil sharpener.

WHEN SHE HELD A secret many years down the road, she still reminded me. By then, I had gotten into the habit of smiling and hiding an eye roll.

“I know, Mother,” I told her with annoyed amusement as she spoke of the end of vacation and the beginning of university.

A slight smile touched her lips. “Good,” she said quietly. “As long as you know.”

BUT WHEN SHE DIED, I wondered if I truly did understand her words.

I crawled into her rocking chair where she had once held me and cried, wishing I had listened to her, been more grateful, remembered that everything—including her—would pass.

Weeks went by, but the pain surged through my heart the way her love once had, and it didn’t stop until I thought it never would.

One evening, a letter sent before her death came back to her house. The mail carrier said the written address didn’t exist, so he was returning it.

Sliding down into the rocking chair, I opened the letter lifelessly and found only eight words:

*Dear Libby,
Pain passes,
Love does not.
—Mother*

by Madison Watai (Grade Ten)
Bishop Carroll High School
Calgary, Alberta

FIRST PRIZE

Scenes from Nowhere

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE MORNINGS when the air was cold but the sun kept your nose from freezing, the sun that by that afternoon would hide its blush behind the clouds. This did not bother the boy sitting at the breakfast counter because it was always grey now, and he forgot how the summer felt on his skin.

He sat with one hand on his head, and the other marked the spot on his page. He read from his comic book as if it held everything he were looking for. The fiction held more reality than everything around him, but all the noise stopped when he looked at her behind the counter. As if all the light in the room rested on her shoulders, and if he dared capture it, then he could understand it more.

She asked if he wanted anything because the only thing he had ordered was a cup of coffee, which he drank through a straw. He ordered a burger with no tomatoes; she giggled as it seemed cynical for ten forty-five in the morning. He asked her sweetly for a pen, which she gladly gave up like the rib to God.

Their dreamscape was constantly interrupted by the world that existed outside their own. She would take their names and say good morning as if the Earth had just started spinning.

He got to work, carefully copying the illustrations from his comic book onto a napkin. His hand gripped his hair to focus on the drawing appearing before him. Whenever given the opportunity, she would look back to him as though he may have disappeared when she wasn't looking. Anyone around them could see the love that blossomed between them; though it was young and maybe simple, it was deeply human. Time stopped when they were near; he always leaned in as she spoke from behind the counter as if Romeo listening to Juliet's plea from beyond the balcony. Everyone felt they were being let into a secret world just by looking in their direction, from those coming from Sunday service to those who drank their coffee alone.

When he knew his welcome had been overstayed in the crowded diner, he put on his coat and slipped a cigarette between his teeth. He knew the pavement outside was much colder than the halo around her head. He left the napkin with her name dotted in hearts and the tomato on the plate that they forgot to remove.

She watched him as he left; her "good mornings" became quieter, her shift became longer, and the sun finally hid away as the snow began to fall along the windows.

by Grace Horlings (Grade Eleven)

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FIRST PRIZE

5:17 P.M.

HE APPRECIATED THE TRANQUILLITY of the quiet road that passed in front of the local library. It added a few extra minutes to his commute, but it allowed him to clear his mind of all the high-school drama and football team stress before getting home.

This neighbourhood wasn't his own. *More peaceful*, he thought. He liked the way the houses stood together, shoulder to shoulder. It reminded him of a close-knit family, similar to his own. It had been a rainy day, but every now and then, the reflection of the sun would shimmer off every roof, making them all look equally magical.

On this day, his pace seemed unusually sluggish. He was tired. The sun was covered by the clouds, and the streetlamps came on. He watched his feet shuffling on the sidewalk, his short dreadlocks hanging just low enough to be in his field of vision. He pulled his phone out of his pocket to check the time and felt a single raindrop trickle onto his brown hand.

In the corner of his eye, red and blue lights flickered brightly from behind. A loud voice addressed him over a speaker. "Sir, lower your gun."

Gun? GUN. The word echoed in his head as his blood ran cold. He was paralyzed. *Could they have mistaken the phone in my hand for a gun?* He stood looking ahead. His hands trembled. He was a subjectively tall young man, standing at six feet one inch—an intimidating figure. He had always stood tall, but he suddenly wanted to shrivel up and sink into the ground. Tears spilled from his eyes. He was overwhelmed, thinking, *I will be shot if I lift my phone. Who will find my body?*

When he finally turned his head, he saw a couple of teenagers holding up fake police lights. One of them was hanging out the passenger window holding a megaphone, grinning at him.

The sun re-emerged, making the roofs shimmer once again. He felt relief. He ran the rest of the journey home, flinging the door open when he arrived. Throwing himself in his mother's arms, he wept and told her he loved her.

by Kamila Bangoura (Grade Twelve)

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Nepean, Ontario

SECOND PRIZE

A Siren's Secret

CREATURES OF THE SEA gathered 'round to hear the mesmerizing melody of the siren. She sat upon her rock, singing about journeys through the seas. Every creature swayed to the lulling lullaby, enchanted by the music.

"Do not listen to her horrid songs, for if you do, you will drown!" came men's voices from behind the group.

The siren turned around so quickly that her wet, sea-blue hair flew over her shoulders as a wave splashing against a rock. She spotted a group of voyagers and dove deep beneath the crashing waves. She swam up to the boats to grace them with her beauty.

Her seaweed-green eyes twinkled like the stars' reflections dancing on still water. Her tail was a deep mauve and shone like the moon. She wore pearls everywhere. Some were scattered throughout her hair like the endless night sky.

"I will reveal the secrets of the ocean to one of your men," she said.

It was a sacred deal between merkind and mankind. If a merperson is seen, they must take one soul deep beneath the ocean waves to reveal the deepest secrets of the sea.

"We do not wish to accept your rules, we're just passing by," the captain said firmly.

"I'll go!" a young sailor aboard one of the ships called. He looked about fifteen and wore a beige cap.

All of the other sailors laughed as he dove into the ice-cold water. "We'll be on the island while you search the forbidden sea," the captain called back as they sailed off into the dark night.

The mermaid swam to the young sailor and planted a siren's kiss on his cheek, allowing him to breathe underwater.

"My name is Maria." She flashed the young sailor a warm smile.

"I'm S—" He was cut off by Maria dragging him deep below the sea's surface.

They were met by smacks of jellyfish and beds of eels putting on an electrifying show before finally reaching the sandy bottom.

"The sea is yours, young fry." Maria smiled at the sailor.

"Whoa, is this telepathy?" he thought aloud.

Maria nodded then swam to a patch of bioluminescent algae and lightly touched it. The whole ocean floor lit up like a light show.

"Is this the ocean's secret?" he asked.

Maria shook her head. Slowly, their surroundings faded into a deep darkness, and all that could be seen was the faint glow of a light. The young sailor turned to face the source of light and was met by his reflection shining from big, pearly teeth.

UP ABOVE, THE LAUGHING sailors returned to the bay to find nothing but a beige cap.

by Keydan Kanik-Williams (Grade Nine)

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Calgary, Alberta

SECOND PRIZE

Paper Boats

HE WAS IN A NARROW BACK ALLEY shadowed by crumbling apartment high-rises on either side. The streetlight hummed, occasionally dimming, veiling the alley in darkness. Ahead roared a busy, waterlogged road. Rain ran down the back of his neck, soaking his collar and pants. His sneakers were ankle-deep in muddy wash from the drainage pipe at the top of the street.

A thick aroma filled the air. Wet pavement and heavenly spices drifting out from the third-floor window. He glanced up to see who was cooking, but the rain blurred his vision. Blinking hard, he shook his head and looked down. In his arms, he bore a crate filled with bright paper crafts, already soggy from the relentless downpour.

“Mother won’t have this. You’ll get sick!”

He looked up. A young girl stood in the alley doorway with an umbrella and a heedful look. Her thin bangs were glued to her forehead, and her cheeks had a subtle pink glow. She shivered from the cold as she called out, “Come inside right this minute! You are getting drenched.”

He could tell she wasn’t serious, because she continued to stand in the doorway, observing him in her knee-high socks and uniform.

“I’ll come in soon. Just a few more minutes. Do you want to join me?”

She pretended to consider it, though this invitation was clearly her hope.

The girl smiled and jumped with two feet into the murky stream of water sopping her stocking feet. The downpour ran down her face and onto her clothes leaving them clinging to her skin.

The two of them stood by the drainpipe. Counting to three, they dumped the crate of colourful vessels into the dark water and watched with bright eyes as they gaily bobbed atop the turning squall. The crafts raced down the hill with great speed, rolling over the loosely laid stones. The youngsters capered behind.

“It’s magical,” the girl cried with joy.

The bright hues created a stark contrast to their dismal surroundings. Each fragile piece floated obliviously to its eventual demise. The boy wondered vaguely what it would be like if he were small enough to sail on one of the boats in the shallow flow: a tiny explorer bound for the twisting underground world of pipes and dark lairs.

Standing in the mouth of the alley, they watched as the gleaming dots drifted into the road, consumed by the deluge of collecting city water. The beautiful boats were instantly wet and dirtied paper crushed beneath the rush-hour traffic.

They paused together, both smiling. As the last boat disappeared, they turned and headed for dinner, leaving the city to rumble into the night.

by Emma Attwell (Grade Ten)
Mount Douglas Secondary School
Victoria, British Columbia

SECOND PRIZE

Dog Walk

I. HATE. EVERYTHING. Anger circulated through my blood. *Failed an exam! Who would have guessed? Months of infinitesimal study and nothing to show.* My insides broiled with the flame of one thousand suns. I stormed home and slammed the front door, sending Mocha, my dog, yelping.

I was contemplating my life choices when I noticed Mocha staring blankly into the corner, chocolate fur drooping sadly. It had been ages since we took a nice walk, considering mornings meant school and evenings meant homework, so I decided to put my boots back on and take Mocha for a stroll. At least, one of us could be happy.

It wasn't until I was outside again when I smelled the distinct scent of a brewing storm. I was tempted to return to the comforts of home, but Mocha's joyful pace spurred me on, leading me off the path, onto a rocky stretch that meandered through long grasses and wildflowers. It was suddenly foggy. Songbirds took shelter in thickets, and frogs hid in the moss. Everywhere I looked I saw that abysmal mark: reflected in the mist, dripping from the leaves, etched into the bark. . . . I imagined my friends, teachers, parents, jumping out from a bush; "*What a failure . . .*," they would jeer.

The rain picked up, bringing me back to my senses. At this rate, Mocha was walking me. The rocks ended. Trees turned to shrubs, then stems, then cattails. We were by the river now, hearing the rush of the stream. Rain fell in lines and sheets. Mocha kept looking back as if shouting, "*Slowpoke!*" Then, disaster quite literally struck.

Thunder rang like a gong. Everything was white. A terrific *boom* blasted my eardrums as lightning struck the willow ahead, splitting it as easily as I snapped my pencil. We began to sprint. Every now and then, more flashes of white blinded us. Thunder, like a snare drum, rolled. The *pitter-patter* of raindrops provided a crescendoing counterpoint.

We ran and ran and ran; suddenly, Mocha stopped. Everything became quiet. No rain. No thunder. No storm. I put on the brakes and fell flat on my face; however, the ground was not hard. There were piles of soft grass to cushion my fall. I knew instantly where Mocha had brought us.

When I was a child and he was a puppy, we would sit here and watch the minnows swim and the bullfrogs catch flies on the lily pads. I felt at peace in that glorious moment. Everything was forgotten. The world came to a standstill.

Only one small realization broke the tranquillity. Thunder resumed its concert, the Earth revolved once more, and I whispered to Mocha, "How are we getting home?" He shrugged.

by Austin Wang (Grade Eleven)
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Waterloo, Ontario

SECOND PRIZE

Stupid, Worthless Silence

INSIDE.

The wall across from my bed was blank. No art, no pictures, just plain beige. I wondered what the wall saw: a lump of a self-destructive person. I stared at the empty space for hours, sweating under layers of too-warm blankets, trying to will myself out of my room, but I admitted defeat; going back to sleep was so much easier.

When I was sleeping, I wasn't myself; I was entirely someone I wanted to be—or maybe someone else completely. Perhaps I was just nothing at all, which was okay too. "Nothing" was tempting.

Stupid, defective, worthless.

They always came back eventually. They came back with a thick, fur coat of guilt to drive home their point: I didn't matter. Life didn't matter. Anything happening past the door to my room was an unknown void that would eat me up and spit me out worse than I already was. I couldn't bear to be worse than the shell I already existed as.

At times, the pain was unbearable, screaming at me to let it out, clawing at me from beneath my skin, saying brutal things to make me snap. Other times, it was peace: quiet, sweet, cunning peace that lulled me to sleep day after day. The peace had a soft voice and told me everything would be all right. I didn't like the peace much because I knew it was lying. The pain was cruel, but it was nothing if not truthful.

Stupid, defective, worthless.

Eventually, time would slip away, and I couldn't feel the cycle anymore. It wasn't morning, afternoon, or evening; it wasn't even night and day. It was a long, straight line that stretched on forever, staying level, never wavering. The hunger turned to a dull ache, my throat burned, and all I cared about was going back to sleep. *Sleep.*

When I was sleeping, I was *smart*. I was *worth something*.

But, when I was sleeping, I wasn't really me.

OUTSIDE.

They never left their room.

The door was shut every day. It was silent when I woke up and silent when I went to sleep. A "so loud that it shook the house" kind of silent. I could feel it every second it went on, as if hands were holding on to the walls and attempting to throw the house away.

Not today . . . maybe tomorrow.

Every time I looked at the door, I craved to pull it open, to make them get up, scream at them to stop this. Their pain was turning into my insanity, didn't they know? I just had to open the door, they just had to get up. One of us had to move.

I stayed silent, too.

by Spencer McCairns (Grade Twelve)

Seycove Secondary Community School
North Vancouver, British Columbia

THIRD PRIZE

The House

THE HOUSE LOVES ME. I know because it says so. When I'm bored of playing with my blocks and want to eat a cookie, I whisper to the walls. The house giggles because it's our little secret. I toddle out of the room, and staircases and doors I've never seen before pop up in front of me. I always open the doors. I always walk down the stairs.

I open one last door and know the trip was worth it, because inside the fancy room is a cookie jar. It sits on a lacy placemat on a little wooden table. I grab a cookie and take a big bite. The gooey chocolate chips are so tasty.

"I love you, House," I say.

"I love you too," the house says.

THE HOUSE HATES ME. I know because it says so. When I've slept in late and need to get to school, I plead with the walls to let me leave quickly. The house laughs as if it's a game. I rush out of the room, and staircases and doors I've never seen before pop up in front of me. I slam open the doors and run down the stairs, but each step only gets me more lost.

I kick the wall in frustration. *Great. Now my foot hurts.* The house seems to get the message, though. A window pops up on the wall, its glass pane covered in grime. I lean forward and open it. The floor tilts. I fall out and land with a splash in a puddle of mud.

"I hate you, House," I say, wiping the mud off my face.

"I hate you too," the house says.

THE HOUSE IS DEAD. I know because it says nothing. When I need to leave for the train, I stare sullenly at the walls and wish the house would start to laugh. It doesn't. After a while, I give up and leave the room. Staircases and doors I've seen a million times stay right where they are. I open the correct doors and walk down the right staircases and get to the front entrance.

With one hand on the brass doorknob, I look back into the house. My footprints make clean tracks through the dust that coats the floor. The last lightbulb still glowing in the chandelier flickers.

"I miss you, House," I say.

There is no response. The only sound in the stale old room is my own breathing. I shake my head (*What did I expect to happen?*) and step out the door.

"I miss you too," the house whispers.

by Delwyn Wells-Rowell (Grade Nine)

Bloor Collegiate Institute

Toronto, Ontario

THIRD PRIZE

The Forbidden Room

“WHY’S THE ATTIC ALWAYS LOCKED?”

Grandmother stiffened and glared. “I’ve told you before, you mustn’t ever go up there.”

“But why?” Ella asked. Her long, auburn, braids fell down her back, and she fiddled impatiently with the pink satin ribbons at their ends.

Grandmother looked furious, but then she sighed. “Something is there—a book—that no child, or anyone, should be around.” She took a charred pot from the kitchen’s ancient cupboards. “I’ve heard it’s a photo album of sorts, and bad things happen to those who go near. So, stay away!”

Sighing, Ella left the kitchen, drifting around her grandparents’ draughty house. She’d taken care of the chickens and goats, swept the porch, done the dishes, and was now bored out of her mind.

Suddenly, she found herself at the ominous stairway that ascended to the attic. Defiantly mounting the groaning steps, she stared at the bolted wooden door in annoyance.

“Won’t you open?”

Like lightning, an old rusting key appeared in the iron padlock. A shiver ran up her spine, but she ignored it and went inside.

Ella gasped. A blanket of dust coated everything in the area, but it wasn’t dark or stuffy as she had expected. In the room’s centre stood an elegant four-post bed, with an exquisitely embroidered silk duvet and several beautiful decorative pillows. To its side, light streamed through partly opened lace curtains. Ella trailed a finger through the mahogany dresser’s grime then retied her pink hair ribbon at the ornate vanity.

Thud! She spun around, finding an open book on the floor. Her heart pounded. Where had that come from?

On the front page sat a cash note, which she snatched without hesitation. Ten whole dollars! All the things she could get!

Abruptly, a chilly draught turned the book’s page, confirming her suspicions as she gazed upon numerous black and white portraits. Each photo had a date fluidly written beneath: 1902, 1895, ’86, etc., some sharing the same year.

Horse hooves sounded from outside. Ella fled the attic, hastily locking the door and hiding the key in her skirt.

THE GRANDFATHER CLOCK GONGED five times, echoing eerily through the silent rooms. Dawn coloured the sky pastel as Ella crept through the house, heading towards the forbidden place. She had to. Imagine what that book might give her now!

The fancy attic was the same as she had left it, book and all, which now sported a gold-plated watch. She placed the fat piece of jewellery in a satchel.

A blood-curdling scream cut through the still morning air.

There’s a new picture in the photo album: a girl with long auburn braids tied with pink satin ribbons, cursively captioned 1909.

by Janelle Ackom (Grade Ten)
University Hill Secondary School
Vancouver, British Columbia

THIRD PRIZE

Survivors

THE CHIPPED WALLS, faded tiles, and graffitied corners of the school washroom are not something the high school students have ever given much notice to. Despite the time spent there gossiping with friends, skipping classes, or simply going to the washroom, no one had thought of it as a haven, a place of refuge. Until now.

The three kids sit on the cold floor, stealing glances at one another with diffidence or swiftly moving their fingers over cell phones. Their different grades, cliques, and personalities do little to lessen the gap between them.

“It’s Ryan. Ryan Maclain,” says one, looking up from her phone.

Her voice startles the rest, a honk on a still road. But the information gives all of them another reason to be anxious: “When will he reach us?” They have heard the name before, but none can recall his face, as if a veil is blocking a part of their memories. They scramble to remember anything about him, thinking that if cornered, they will be able to coerce him to stop. Their minds waver over the other possibility of being discovered, and they are overcome with a deep feeling of devastation.

Someone’s stomach growls. Students were at their grumpiest during the class before lunch, when gunshots were heard and turmoil began. Upon hearing shouts of distress and of teachers advising to stay inside the classrooms, the three girls in the female’s washroom decided to stay inside, barricading the door by looping a belt over the door closer and pushing a desk from the hallway against it. Hours have gone by, and even the one with a sanguine temperament is slowly losing hope.

As they sit there, cell phone batteries having died, regarding their companions with interest and curiosity, they finally look at one another, sharing uncertain smiles. In that instant, they create an alliance, having faith that no matter what happens, they will fight for their safety together.

Suddenly, there is an alarming banging on the door. Anguish crosses their faces, then determination. They communicate in hushed voices, frantically searching for an object that resembles a weapon, a hidden exit, or anything that can protect them. The banging comes again, louder this time. The volume of the kids’ voices increases. The banging persists. As the students back towards the corner of the cramped bathroom, all pairs of terrorized eyes looking in one direction, the banging stops, and the door falls to the ground.

by Rhea Gupta (Grade Eleven)

St. John’s-Ravenscourt School

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THIRD PRIZE

The Walls Were Blazing

THE WALLS WERE BLAZING. The flamingo wallpaper peeled off like skin, falling in charred clumps to the ground. Smoke coated his lungs like a scorched blanket, choking him as he gripped the railing. He hauled Juliet up the last few stairs, her body a deadweight in his leaden arms. Mel's eyes stung as he looked across the room, at the only exit they had a clear path to, a kitchen window.

Juliet moaned as he pulled her across the grey floor tiles, the crash of timber sending soot into the air behind him. He had so many questions and no time to find their answers. If they made it out, then he would get his chance. But for now, he could only carry Juliet from the painful death crawling up behind them.

He slumped his girlfriend onto a chair and reached for the window crank, but its touch sent crippling pain through his hand. Mel whipped his head around, his mind that of a feral animal backed into a corner. Wild eyes fell onto his father's golf clubs, the bag left there despite his mother's insistent attempts to have them moved. He leapt across to the tall bag and yanked out an iron, the black handle sticky from the heat. Grunting, he swung the club into the glass, flinging shards out of the house. He swung again, and again, as the fire crept towards them.

Juliet was gaining consciousness as Mel pulled her towards the window. Her dazed expression grew into hysteria, and she began struggling. Mel yanked her towards the window, but she only screamed, unaware that he was her only shot at living. Gripping her shoulders, he forced her gaze into his.

"Juliet, if you don't get out that window right now, we die." She didn't respond but gave a slight nod, letting him lift her towards the square opening. She let out a cry of pain, and he saw that he hadn't cleared all the glass away from the edges. Her slender body eased through, and she perched precariously on the sill outside.

All he heard was her steady breath before she jumped from the window and a pain incomparable to anything he felt before bit into his legs. Howling in anguish, Mel pulled himself through the window.

He didn't hear Juliet calling to him from the lawn below; he didn't even hear his own screaming. All he heard was his pain, the waves of agony coursing through him as he fell from the burning house.

by Mathew Anton (Grade Twelve)

Fox Valley High School

Fox Valley, Saskatchewan