

FIRST PRIZE

Camp

I've never been to summer camp before. I was shocked I was going to go, shocked at where I was going. When Mom broke the news, I didn't know what to think.

My name is Ashlyn Thomson, and so far, camp's actually pretty awesome. But making friends has been tricky. Thankfully, I have Emmie. We hit it off right away, and we have been together non-stop since day one.

Today's activity is canoeing. Our mission is simple: have fun together!

Once we reach the lake, we are greeted by Counsellor Sally.

"Welcome to canoeing, campers!" Sally shouts enthusiastically. "Ashlyn and Emmie. I'm afraid you two can't canoe together because you're both inexperienced. Emmie, you go with Tony from cabin 5, Ashlyn, you go with Counsellor Kyle."

Tony is a really quiet kind of kid. He doesn't seem like the worst canoeing partner, but it's not me! That ruins everything! Emmie and I part ways to go with our unwanted canoeing buddies. I begrudgingly get in the boat and start paddling.

We've only been on the lake for a few seconds, and I just know this is not going to go well. Emmie yells at me, trying to get my attention, and I'm shocked by what I see!

Tony is in the water, and his arms are flailing. Tony can't swim! And he doesn't have a life jacket on. With Tony drowning and nobody doing anything, I do the bravest, dumbest thing of my life. I jump in.

I realize immediately that this was a stupid decision. The water is ice cold, and the shock feels like pins and needles. I push on towards Tony. I grab him under the arms, and he calms down a bit. Our weight combined is too heavy for my life jacket, and we start to sink. I remember that I have a whistle; this could save Tony's life. I blow it with all my might, over and over, until my ears ring with the noise.

Counsellor Sally hears the blasts and paddles towards us, hoisting us up into her canoe. We paddle back to shore, my heart hammering in my throat at what I just did.

Tony thanks me up and down for saving him. I catch my breath and nod.

"Next time, though," he says, "help first. Brave hero second."

I laugh. "You're funny, Tony." I say.

"Thanks," he replies. "I don't have many friends, though."

"Really?" I ask. "If you need a friend, you can hang out with me and Emmie!" I say.

"Seriously?" replies Tony with a smile.

Emmie and I had set out to spend more time together. But what we found was even better. We made a new friend.

by Willa Holmes (Grade Five)

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FIRST PRIZE

The Fire Alarm

My heart raced in my chest. I reached up to wipe the sweat off my forehead. *Why had I done it? Okay, I know why.* I've always been the impulsive type.

When I walked out of the assembly to go to the washroom, the same thing that always happens to me happened again. The ringing in my ears drowned out all the noise coming from the gym doors. I started walking as if an invisible force were pulling me forwards. My hand reached out and pulled the fire alarm. The loud buzzing noise woke me from my trance. Kids were pouring out the gym doors in a panic while the teachers attempted frantically to organize their students into lines. *What have I done?* I quickly slid into line with my class and walked silently outside.

Mrs. Holiday, the principal, stood at the front of the class. She was pacing back and forth, shaking her head. "Which one of you did it?" she said.

I raised my shaking hand in the air. "How do you know it was one of us?" I asked in a quivering voice.

"It might not be, but I have to check," she replied. "I will give whoever pulled the alarm ten seconds to confess," said Mrs. Holiday. You could have heard a pin drop. Everyone held their breath, waiting for someone to speak. No one did. "Okay," said Mrs. Holiday after ten seconds. "If you know anything about this, please tell me," she said as she walked out of the room.

My friends Harmony, Luke, and I were walking home after school when Harmony said, "What do you think of the fire alarm pulling?"

"It's like a real mystery in our school!" said Luke.

"What do you think of it?" Harmony asked me.

"I don't know," I said nervously. "I, um, haven't really thought about it."

"Whoever did it must be really brave," said Harmony.

"Or maybe they're just impulsive," I said. They both stared at me. "Or brave," I offered, trying to break the silence.

"Impulsive like you?" asked Luke.

"No," I said apprehensively.

"It was you!" yelled Harmony.

"Yes," I said reluctantly. "But don't tell anyone," I said.

"My lips are sealed," Luke said, miming zipping his lips shut.

"I'll try," said Harmony.

As soon as Mr. Harrison walked in the class the next morning, the room started buzzing with questions. "Who pulled the fire alarm?" Aaron asked.

"I don't know," he said, but I could tell by the way he said it that he did.

Then the morning announcements came on. "Could Aliyah Shaw please come down to the office?" Everyone stared at me. *Oh no. Harmony!*

by Meredith Holloway (Grade Six)
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SECOND PRIZE

Agent Ape

In the Zoo Nationale des Singes, in Paris, there lived an orangutan. He was the star of the zoo's attractions. He had been taught by Zookeeper Fred to crack codes, merely to solve the newspaper's daily jumbles. But, little did Fred know, the FBI had recruited him for those very qualities. They had also taught him how to talk, how to travel around Paris, how to drive a car, and how to understand human language.

That day, Agent Pillowcase had given him a secret document that was to be delivered *only* to Agent Donut, at precisely 1200 hours, at the Eiffel Tower. But the enemy agents from CAT (Crime Agency Troublemakers) had been conducting surveillance on Agent Ape. In the dead of night, the ape clandestinely crept out of his enclosure and made his way to 59 Baguette Avenue. There, he produced a hairy, orange robot. The perfect decoy! He sent it into the night.

Meanwhile, enemy Agent Mercury watched from a supposedly empty car. He waited until the orangutan had driven off, then he sped after him. The ape looked in his rear-view mirror and saw the determined look on Agent Mercury's face. The ape drove up the street and screeched to a halt. He made a U-turn and drove over Agent Mercury's shiny black Lamborghini! The orangutan then sped off towards the Eiffel Tower. But Agent Mercury did not give up. "Get back here!" He hijacked a car and drove after the ape.

But, while he was chasing the orangutan, he passed Le Petit Beignet, a famous donut shop. He stopped. He sped into the store and ate all the donuts in sight. Then he hopped into the car and zoomed through the night. He was so far away, he didn't hear the shoplifters alarm go off!

Meanwhile, the ape was at the Eiffel Tower. He climbed up all the stairs and ended up at the souvenir machine. He punched in 360, and the machine turned around, revealing a large hole in the wall. He got in, and the elevator took him to the tipitty top of the tower. On the opposite side of the tower, Agent Donut was doing the same thing. They met at the top.

"Do you have the files?" asked Agent Donut.

"Yes," grunted the orangutan.

"Good."

Just then, the French doors to the tower opened and Agent Mercury burst in, frantically trying to remember the passcode. The police followed him.

"Agent Mercury," began Officer Pete, "you are now under arrest for stealing seventeen donuts." They dragged him away to jail.

The ape, still at the top of the tower, looked down triumphantly at Paris, the City of Light.

Mission accomplished!

by Hannah Behmann (Grade Five)
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SECOND PRIZE

The Catch

Xavier sat at the edge of a wooden dock, his bare feet dangling. Below him were fish he wanted to catch; above him, apricot streaks danced like salmon leaping out of the water. Xavier's sister had just been diagnosed with cancer, and his father had to sell the boat to get the money for treatment. His father appeared beside Xavier. Without a word, they climbed into their sleek motorboat, knowing that this was their last time they would ever have a fishing trip like this.

The throaty howl of the boat abruptly stopped in front of the rolling hills and evergreen forests. Xavier's heart filled with anticipation as his dad set up the fishing lines. As the sun rose over the beautiful forests and the sparkly water, Xavier and his dad jerked their fishing lines, hoping for a last memory before the trip was over.

Xavier was dreamily staring at the seagulls overhead when he felt a tug on his line so strong, it almost tugged him into the icy water. He snapped out of his daze and began reeling the line with all the strength he could muster, his dad standing behind Xavier, ready to help. Right when the line broke through the water, Xavier was yanked into the sea, but not before his dad snatched the fishing rod just in time, and not before Xavier saw what he had caught.

Xavier shivered in his soaking clothes, but he was not miserable at all. Instead, there was a huge grin spreading across his face as his dad meticulously removed the bait from the sixty-pound lingcod. His father patted him on the back and said in awe, "That was a nice catch, Son!" Xavier watched as the lingcod helplessly flopped about and snapped its jaws in a useless effort to escape. For the first time, Xavier felt pity and empathy for a fish.

"Are you sure?" his dad asked when Xavier told him he wanted to release the fish.

Xavier nodded vigorously. "You always tell me to look at things from a different perspective. Don't you think if you were that fish, you would want to continue living?"

His dad smiled and gestured towards the motionless fish lying on the wooden floor of the motorboat. "The honour's yours."

Xavier hefted the fish up onto his shoulders and watched as it slipped back into the water.

His father tapped Xavier gingerly on the shoulder and spoke softly, as if it were a secret: "When I was young, my mother told me that generosity and mercy always lead to happiness."

And indeed, Xavier could feel his spirits rising. "If only God would have the same mercy on my sister," Xavier mused.

by Adrian Chan (Grade Six)
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THIRD PRIZE

Time Tangled

I woke up at seven forty-five and walked out with my overly heavy backpack filled with homework. It was very normal, or was it? I jumped into the car.

At school, it was normal. I got tortured! Jeff the bully was invading my life. He was making school a miserable experience. I know you may be asking, “Marcus, why were you getting tortured? You are too awesome!” Yes, I know, but Jeff had no common sense! He was a typical bully, with a nasty smile and squinty eyes.

I went home with the usual sad face. I was doing homework and stopped to look at the clock when the clock’s hands suddenly froze and slowly cycled back. Everything turned pitch black. Then, I reappeared in bed, and the time was seven forty-five! I woke up and had the same totally normal day *again*. This happened over and over, and I have been stuck in a time loop for the past five hundred years. I don’t know how it happened.

One morning, I jumped up. “I’m sick of this!” As always, I ate the crumbly bread and walked out, ready for the most tedious day in history. Oh, how I wanted this to stop. I arrived at school, and Jeff the bully pushed me into a corner and took my lunch. I stumbled into my classroom, tripped a few times on nothing in particular, and handed in my homework. Then, I collapsed on my desk but realized my desk was nonexistent. I flopped onto the ground. My desk had been moved at the last moment by Jeff.

“Ha! You’ve got to look at this!” announced Jeff.

The feeling of sheer humiliation came. *One day I will. . .* My brain couldn’t take it anymore. “I’m sick of you,” I panted. “If this continues, . . . you will regret it.”

“Ha! What can you do? Fall down?” replied Jeff.

I realized then I was more than just a loser who falls down. “You know how you do this every day and you won’t stop?” I defended myself. “You are doing a thing called bullying! You become happy when others are sad. Show some respect for once!” I yelled. In that instant, I knew I would never be the same person.

I blacked out and woke up at seven forty-five. I went down to eat breakfast, getting ready for another repeat day, *but* I ate bacon and eggs! Since when? I had broken the time loop! I went to school as a normal guy—*actually* normal. I didn’t see Jeff anymore.

I went home, and the clock never reversed again. I had won the fight against time.

by Marcus Liu (Grade Five)

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THIRD PRIZE

That Dreaded Ship

That ship, that dreaded ship containing the beast arrived at dawn. Or it might have been dusk, midday, or even midnight. Deep in space, the lights never indicate the time. I'm the dock manager of this space station—or I *was*.

When that ship landed, I went to oversee the landing process; all seemed to be fine. My colleague Doctor Joe was heading back to Earth but stopped here for a pit stop. All seemed perfect, nothing wrong, until *it* came out. Suddenly, a roar boomed out of Cargo Dock 1 and chills scurried down my spine. I immediately sent a crew to investigate.

Silent as the solar wind, we crept down into the void armed with nothing but our flashlights. Then there it was! A repulsive beast stood before us. Its whole body was a wriggling centipede. The thing's single eye enclosed in its gaping jaw emitted a red light of hatred. Within a split second, it threw itself at us. We scrambled through the darkness. I heard some of my crewmates scream in terror. Then, dead silence.

By the time that we escaped the ship, less than half of us had made it out before the ship burst into flames. We thought our ordeal was over, then the beast crawled out unscathed. I don't know what happened next, but I remember the self-destruct alarm blaring into my ears. We frantically clambered towards the escape chamber. I knew that the beast was close behind me, its noxious breath slamming itself on me like a molten piston. I could feel my skin scorching, but I persisted.

I aimlessly ran. Then, after what seemed to be hours of running, I realized that I was alone; the beast, and my crew, had lost me. I collapsed to catch my breath. My back seared from the acidic moisture of the beast's crude breath, which had sprayed out of its eye.

Suddenly, I heard it; the beast blared out a guttural sound from afar. In front of me was the escape chamber. I scrambled to salvation, with the beast close behind. Finally, I entered an escape elevator and was zipped down to the escape ship, just as the space station collapsed. I could also hear the monster scream—or it could have been an explosion. Whatever it was, I was far away from it.

Then, I found some of my friends and crewmates. None of them spoke a word, just sitting there, trying to fathom the events that had just happened. But one thing was for sure, that thing was gone, dead and deceased. As the escape ship activated, I knew we were headed somewhere—not back, not to nearby planets, just somewhere.

by Brian Leong (Grade Six)
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