

FIRST PRIZE

Arcanum

Detective Emma Sharpe and her good-for-nothing co-worker Jake had solved many mysteries—or really, Emma had solved many mysteries. All Jake did was sit around and give worthless advice that distracted Emma from her work.

One day, Jake was reading the paper while Emma was busy signing paperwork, as usual. The phone rang, startling them both. It was the police in the dusty nearby town of Arcanum, and they needed Emma and Jake to come immediately.

Three hours later, Emma was sitting with Jake in the Arcanum Police Department receiving a case. “There have been several thefts from an old apartment building,” said Police Chief Gaffeur. “The most important one is a priceless painting by Picasso.”

Boy, am I tired, thought Jake, *I think I’ll take a nap.*

“The owner was hiding it there,” continued Gaffeur. “The thief is extremely clever and leaves no traces.” Gaffeur bid them good luck, and they started out.

They arrived at the apartment and looked around. It was dusty and dirty.

“All right,” said Emma, immediately taking charge. “I’ll go look for witnesses, and you search the apartment for clues.”

“Okay,” said Jake, completely disregarding Emma as he lay down to take a short nap on the sofa.

An hour later, Emma came back empty-handed. Her knock woke Jake up. She started searching the apartment, assuming Jake hadn’t found anything, which was correct.

“I found it!” exclaimed Emma, holding up a singular black hair. “We can run a DNA test and search our criminal records for matches. Come on!” Emma hurried Jake towards the lab.

When they arrived, Emma gave the scientists the hair. Meanwhile, Jake brushed off his coat, which was dirty from the sofa. Hair flew everywhere, but mostly on the lab equipment. They waited restlessly for the results.

When they got them, Emma felt very foolish. “It’s a cat hair!” one of the scientists explained. “But the hair that Jake brought in was human, so we can test that.”

“I . . . er . . . yes! It was very difficult to find,” Jake said dramatically, lying through his teeth. He was nervous, but what could he do now?

Three days later, Emma and Jake returned to the lab. “Good news!” said the scientist. “We have a match! The culprit is Albert Cambrioleur; he was released from custody last month.”

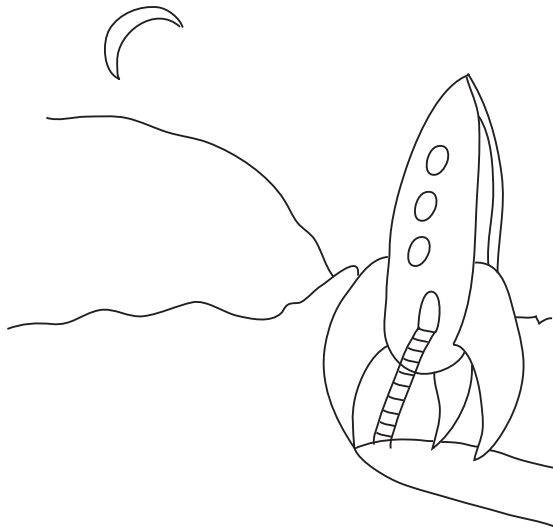
Emma and Jake returned to the police department. “It’s Albert Cambrioleur!”

“Fantastic!” said Gaffeur. “We know where to find him, and he shouldn’t have had time to sell the Picasso yet.”

Everyone congratulated Jake on his “discovery” of the hair that had solved the case. For the rest of the day, Jake did nothing but brag.

Emma put her head in her hands and groaned.

by Rebecca Silver (Grade Five)
Kerrisdale Elementary School
Vancouver, British Columbia



FIRST PRIZE

Human Migration

It is night. Then again, it is always dark here, but darkness is better than yellow light. Earth is damaged because past generations took it all for granted and left those of us born in 2040 with a mess. The Space Programme (SP) built a spaceship capable of travelling faster than light, and people who wanted to leave took tests. I passed the tests and now am on *Goldilocks 1*, travelling a couple of years through space to the Goldilocks planet.

I'm lonely here. My parents made me leave them behind, and I have no friends. Sophie, a former classmate, is here. We have never talked, though. Plus, both of us are shy. So, I just help with chores around the spaceship.

Three years into the expedition, I want to do my usual thing: eat breakfast, do chores, eat lunch, do chores, and finally, eat dinner. But when I ask what I can do, Mrs. Green says, "Help the new girl." I turn around and realize it's Sophie.

"Hi," says Sophie.

"Hi," I say back.

The chore on her note is checking the little motor. We go to level ten, only to find a locked door. We try to open the door when an alarm goes off. Suddenly, there's a little explosion. Sophie and I run up, urging people to get into the evacuation ships. I hop in one immediately, but Sophie stays behind to help the others. I realize she is very selfless.

My thoughts get interrupted by an engine rumbling. My ship starts shooting straight ahead. I glance behind me to see if the big ship is empty. Then, I hear a blast. Did Sophie make it?

That's when I see her. She's floating behind me. For the first time in my life, I'm grateful for the rule: "You have to keep your space suits on at all times." I take the cord attached to my ship, attach it to myself, and float out to get Sophie.

Around five minutes later, she's lying on the bed in the ship, the robot tending to her. There's one little hole in her suit. Apparently, she got cut there. She is unconscious.

Four years after, Sophie and I are swimming in another ocean. I can see the scar on her arm. The air here is fresh, even though it is warm. I don't have to be worried about what I'm swimming in or what I'm eating. This planet is perfect. We wonder how our families are doing, and if they're still alive. What has happened to our planet in the past seven years? Did people finally realize how bad things were and start to change them for the better?

by Eliana Grollimund (Grade Six)

German International School Toronto
Toronto, Ontario

SECOND PRIZE

A Snow Pair

Once upon a time on the very far side of the North Pole, there lived a polar bear, and his name was Samuel. He did not like eating meat. So, every day he would look in the snow very carefully for something to eat. Most of the time, he would find grass, but occasionally, he would find flowers.

One day he dug a hole, but just as he was finishing, his mom called, so he dashed back to the den. When he got back, all the grass in his hole was gone. Samuel was so upset, but then he realized that being upset wasn't going to get him anywhere, so he dug another hole. But then, Samuel saw a seal and had to chase it. He chased it all the way to the water, and the seal jumped right in. When he got back to his hole, everything in it was gone. Samuel was so upset that he set a trap over another hole to catch whatever was eating his grass.

He set the trap and hid behind a big rock and waited. Only one minute had passed before he heard a twang of his trap. Excitedly, Samuel ran to his trap, and he discovered a white snow rabbit.

The rabbit yelled, "Please don't eat me!"

Samuel said in disgust, "Why would I eat you?"

"Because you are a polar bear," said the rabbit.

"Oh, yeah. I'm not like the other polar bears. I don't like eating meat," replied Samuel.

"That's a relief. Then, what do you eat?" asked the rabbit.

"I eat grass and flowers," said Samuel.

"So do I," replied the rabbit.

"Then you're the one who's been eating my grass," said Samuel.

The rabbit said, "Sorry, I didn't know that it was yours."

Samuel replied, "That's okay. I'll just have to dig another hole. By the way, what's your name?"

"My name's Howard. What's yours?" asked Howard.

"My name is Samuel," replied the polar bear.

"How about untying this net for me, eh?" asked Howard.

"Yes, I will," said Samuel, laughing.

"Thanks, I could help you find some grass if you want," said Howard.

"That would be great," said Samuel.

They dug and dug all day and ate a feast. Slowly but surely, they started to become friends. It started to get dark, so they said goodbye and ran back to their homes. When Samuel got home, his tummy was so full of grass and flowers that he went right to sleep.

The next day, they did even more playing, and they were very good friends for the rest of their lives.

by Titus Kennedy (Grade Five)
Crofton Elementary School
Crofton, British Columbia

SECOND PRIZE

Impossible Paradise

A little girl squealed, hopping up and down, and dashed towards an ice-cream stand. The beautiful sunlight illuminated her platinum-blonde hair, creating a halo around her fair head.

People milled around amiably at the town fair, enjoying the sweltering heat of the midday sun, laughing and chatting about the weather and recent events.

Behind the little girl, her parents conversed with their hands held, eyes drifting to their daughter, the apple of their eye. The woman laughed at something her husband had said. Their daughter paused in her hunt for ice cream and pivoted, noticing her parents' ecstasy.

Then, the woman reached towards her daughter, whispering something in her ear tenderly. Her stunning cobalt and silver eyes sparkled mysteriously. The girl spun, her exuberant smile brightening the entire grassy meadow.

She grasped the hand of the little boy next to her, surging for the crowded picnic area, only to be halted in her steps by a sinister-looking man.

The girl felt a firm hand on her shoulder, her father's perhaps. But, when the man removed his sunglasses, every bit of her attention was fixated on his hypnotizing, jet-black eyes.

Her eyes remained on his as the world around them fell apart, the distinct memory of a woman screaming her name fearfully, a man anxiously shouting her name, "Nicky! Nicky!" and a young boy with twin features to hers trying to pull her away as the meadow faded to black and white.

Still, she stayed rooted to the spot, unable to tear her gaze from his. The man extended his hand to her, pulling her back to the present, the painful reality she simply couldn't face. Her hand reached traitorously for his, and she watched helplessly, horrified, as his hand tightened around hers.

Nikolina bolted upright on her flimsy excuse of a bed, mind reeling from the memory of the mysterious man's mesmerizing, obsidian eyes and . . . the possibility of such a world, one where running and laughing—and happiness existed.

She gazed out the hole in her tiny shelter, one of many around the world, places where humans still existed, all of them either sickly, starving, or dying of the plague—a highly contagious mutated virus . . . and frighteningly deadly.

Beyond her loomed the desolation of the bleak and forbidding world. Her bed of scraps didn't provide comfort or reassurance of any kind, much less happiness or warmth.

A long time ago, she had a family who loved her . . . but those times were gone, along with the happiness she had dreamt.

Nikolina shook her head sorrowfully. No, a world where laughter and freedom existed wasn't possible here—here in the never-ending darkness and anguish of a plague-infected world.

by Nora Shao (Grade Six)
Tecumseh Elementary School
Vancouver, British Columbia

THIRD PRIZE

The Emerald Stone

There was a boy named Bobby Joe. He had a cat named Tiger Claw and was best friends with John.

One day, John was playing at Bobby Joe's house.

"Hey, John, I really wish I could buy a new computer because mine is not that good and it is old," said Bobby Joe.

They started reading comics and eating chips when John saw a shiny book on the shelf. It even had a shiny spine. John pulled it off the shelf and read the title: "*History of The Emerald Stone*." Wow, this tells you everything about where The Emerald Stone is. It is in the temple around five hundred metres from our school!" said John.

"I bet I could sell it to buy a computer," said Bobby Joe. They rode to the school on their bikes, but Bobby Joe didn't realize that Tiger Claw was following behind.

They left their bikes at the school and walked to the temple. Thankfully, there were no other people visiting the temple that day.

While John was walking into the temple, he saw a glimpse of a lever way up high but continued to walk into the temple.

The hallway was blocked by a huge door. Bobby Joe said, "There must be a lever or a switch that opens it."

"I saw a lever on the top of the temple, but how will we ever be able to push it?" replied John.

Bobby Joe saw Tiger Claw at the door of the temple and said with surprise, "What are you doing here? Get down here before you hurt yourself!"

Tiger Claw ignored him and climbed the temple towards the lever and pushed it over. There was a loud clunk as the door slowly began to open. John thanked Tiger Claw and Bobby Joe said, "Thank you, Tiger Claw, but get down here right now!"

The door finally opened, and inside the dusty room was The Emerald Stone on a large pillar.

"We found it!" said Bobby Joe happily.

"What should we do with it?" said John. "Still want to buy that computer?"

Bobby Joe thought for a second and said, "No, it's priceless, so let's give it to the museum to put on display."

The two thanked Tiger Claw and were excited to tell their parents about what they had done!

by Aaron Poeschek (Grade Five)
École Doncaster Elementary School
Victoria, British Columbia

THIRD PRIZE

A Strange Day in March

Inspired by *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* by Chris Van Allsburg.

My twin brother, Nick, and I went up to our cottage for March break. It was the hottest March break I have ever experienced—not normal hot. Of course, I was stuck in the car for three hours. Nick began singing about fifteen minutes into the drive. It got very annoying by the twentieth verse of the “Cha Cha” song. I slammed my pillows on either side of my head. I couldn’t wait to get there.

We arrived around 3:34 p.m. (that’s specific). I leapt out of the car and ran down to the water. Nick followed behind. “What is the big deal? We come here *all* the time! I would rather do something else . . .,” he groaned.

“Wow. I wish you could hear yourself,” I said. He shrugged.

I finally convinced Nick to skip stones on the water. He came to the water and chucked a rock into the water. “That is not skipping,” I said.

“I know that,” he said. I picked up one and threw it. It sank. He looked at me, but I pretended not to notice. I threw another. It made a satisfying *splash* and sunk. “You didn’t try,” he said. I found another rock and threw it with all of my might. It skipped four times.

“Ha! Look at *that!*” I bragged. *Splash, splash.* . . . The rock came skipping back across the water and landed at our feet.

Nick looked at the rock, then at me. “What did you do?” he asked in shock.

“I don’t know! Does that always happen the first time you skip a rock?” I asked. He shrugged.

I skipped another, and sure enough, it came skipping back. I threw another. It skipped out and came back. I was so confused. I almost pinched myself to make sure I was not dreaming. I wasn’t. It was too real.

The next morning, I woke up to an uncomfortable lump cradling the back of my head. I lifted my pillow and peered under. There were three rocks. I was so scared I almost fell off the top bunk. I threw one down at Nick, and it hit his lower leg. “Ow!” he said.

“Why would you scare me like that? You know about the rocks!” I said, infuriated.

“What are you talking about? I swear I didn’t do it!” Nick said.

“Ha. Likely story,” I said sarcastically.

There were three loud thumps on the window. Then, silence. I opened it up. On the windowsill sat three rocks. “Uh, you couldn’t possibly have done that,” I stuttered.

“I think it’s time to get out of here!” Nick said.

Then, there were three knocks on the door. “I vote we stay,” I whispered.

by Tess Scott-Smith (Grade Six)

C.M.L. Snider Elementary School

Wellington, Ontario