

# FIRST PRIZE

## Five Stars

“WHY, MAXIM, it is a great honour to have you here. You are a legend of food critics, and we will not disappoint you. I will present you with the uni, the ikura, and the fugu.”

*This must be a great restaurant. The chef is quite chubby, and every time I've had a chubby chef, the food tastes extraordinary! I'm salivating! Oh, wow, drool! My mouth is overflowing, and I can't stop!*

“Maxim, you're drooling.”

“Yes, I am. Please, don't worry.”

“Well, your uni is ready! But you will need to follow me out the back door to find it.”

*What kind of chef is this? The uni exists outside the back door? In the alley?*

“Out here! The ocean exists behind our restaurant!”

He grabbed onto the lever on the door and slid it open, revealing the Pacific Ocean. I was mind blown, and I held my head tightly with both hands in disbelief.

“Monsieur, we have farmed an endless amount of sea urchins and have fiddled with its genetics so the yellow piece of it tastes four times better!

*Mmm, this must be delicious, but . . . I don't think I've eaten lab food before! Oh, well—whoops! He's talking!*

“Maxim? You are about to drop right here onto a roller coaster specially designed for your visit!”

*Oh, wow, a roller coaster! Man, I hate G-forces. Well, I guess—Whooooaaa!* “I'm dropping!”

“Yeah, that happens.”

Suddenly, we landed on padded seats, and we were thrust forward at a speed that made us lose all of our bodily functions. We headed towards a large digital screen with an image of the chef explaining his legendary dishes and then went full throttle at a 90-degree angle going down at a breakneck speed. Suddenly, a yellow, squishy cluster with orange bits trailing behind it flopped right in my mouth. *YUMMY!*

I exclaimed, “What a great uni and ikura!”

The roller coaster stopped, launching me into the air onto a chair, in front of a translucent piece of meat, which was the fugu.

“This is poisonous, so you must lick it,” said the chef. “Just savour the flavour.”

So, I stooped over and extended my tongue, but suddenly, a seagull smacked into the back of my head, and I said, “Ow!” And with my mouth wide open saying those words, the meat got pushed far into my esophagus. Then, I coughed it back up, and there was an explosion of my tastebuds popping. But then, I fell on my face.

“I have the EpiPen! Wait, stick it in the thigh or the buttocks?” The chef scratched his head. “BUTTOCKS, IT IS!”

*Plunge.*

“Maxim, are you there?”

“No, the thigh, you fool!” whimpered Maxim.

**by Jayden Yang** (Grade 5)  
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# FIRST PRIZE

## Off a Cliff

THE WIND WAS HOWLING outside. I was shaking with worry. My house was freezing, as we had no money for heat. I shut the window for a little peace.

Looking in the mirror, I saw my pale face. The door slammed open, making me jump. A scruffy man stood in the doorway. “Holly, we can’t find Cora,” he grunted. “She disappeared.” I let out a small whimper. I sat down. He left me in silence.

I stared out the window, “*You won’t understand!*” Cora’s voice rang in my head. “*NO ONE understands! I miss Mom. Everyone except me has one!*” Those were the last words my best friend spoke to me before disappearing.

*I’m gonna find you, Cora*, I thought on repeat. *Where would Cora go?* I thought about my spontaneous friend. I sat up straight. They wouldn’t dare search the North Cliff. If Cora didn’t want to be found, that’s where nobody would look.

I sprinted out the door. I had to run through the woods. I pushed against the thick brush. My thin legs were scratched and bleeding. I could feel the sharp pain as they bled madly. The trees finally ended, and there was a steep drop. “Cora! Are you down there?” my hoarse voice rasped. I waited for noise.

“Holly, . . . help!” It was a faint reply.

*She’s alive!* I climbed down the cliff as carefully as I could. My ragged clothing was no protection against the fierce winds, and I went numb. My muscles started shaking as I held on for my life. I had to take the plunge, but I didn’t know if there would be rock under me. *Help Cora*, my brain told me. *If you don’t do this, Cora will die.* I let go. . . .

Instead of hard rock, I felt icy water swallow me. I swam to the rocks by the cliff. I saw an odd shape lying on an open rock. When I got to the shape, I collapsed. Cora’s brown hair was plastered to her face, and she was soaking. She was frigid. The waves were getting bigger. One must have knocked her out as it crashed. I felt a faint pulse. *She needs help!*

“Stay with me. Come on, Cora,” I talked to her, trying to keep myself calm. “Help! Please!”

I saw something move in the water. I crawled to the edge of the rock. A face looked back at me! It had emerald-green eyes, flowing magenta hair, and sharp features. A huge wave rose up behind it. A pale hand grabbed my ankle, pulling me towards the water. The wave crashed. I let out a bloodcurdling scream. It all went black.

**by Milena Felton** (Grade 6)

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# SECOND PRIZE

## When the Sun Comes Back

CHRISTINE TURNED HER HEAD, pressing her pillow against her ears. The deafening blasts rattled her windows. It was World War II, and Christine was trying to sleep as much as she could.

She fingered the wooden cabinet beside her and came across a dog-eared picture. There, in the picture was her brother, Charlie, in his military uniform, marching on the field. It had been months since Charlie had left for the army, and Christine missed him dearly. She placed it on top of the cabinet and slowly closed her eyes.

It had seemed like seconds before a loud *bang* erupted. Christine shot up and quickly ran out of her bed. Her mother and father were up too. Her father crept to the window and glanced outside. Her mother nervously stood beside the cabinet.

“Looks as if someone bombed one of the houses,” he replied. He walked out of their house as if it were the most casual thing to do in the middle of a war, Christine and her mother trailing behind him.

Christine spotted her friend Talia peeking out the window of her house. “What are they doing?” Christine asked quietly.

A small group of soldiers and men in blue uniforms were surveying the scene. “Police,” her mother muttered softly. Her hands shook as she flattened her weathered nightgown.

Then, Christine saw him. Standing there, in his big military uniform, was Charlie! “Mom!” she whispered, tugging her arm. Her mother looked up, and Christine pointed. Her mother looked surprised for a moment, then smiled. She whispered something to Christine’s father, and he smiled too.

Charlie glanced around then saw them. He mumbled a quick excuse to one of the soldiers then rushed over, scooping Christine into his arms. He hugged his mother and father.

“How is it?” his mother asked tearfully.

“It’s going well, and the troop’s treating me fine,” he spoke. “I’d better go now,” he added. His mother wiped away a tear. He shot a smile at them, possibly the last smile he would give them, and was off.

A FEW YEARS LATER, Christine cut a potato in half. Now that the war had ended, there weren’t as many supplies as possible, and Charlie still hadn’t returned.

There was a gentle knock on the door. Christine froze. *No. Could it be . . . ?* She whirled around and ran after her parents as they opened the door. And, as he brushed his curly brown hair, holding his camouflage bag and military hat, it was Charlie! Christine shrieked. Charlie grinned. Her mother was crying. Her father wiped his eyes. She hugged Charlie tightly, looking behind him at the blazing Sun. But her heart shone brighter than that shining Sun.

*by Avishi Kothalawala* (Grade 5)

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# SECOND PRIZE

## Bravery

JAY PLUNGED HIS HAND UNDERWATER like a snake, searching for a crab. At last, he felt its sharp pincers close on his finger and swiftly drew up his hand to see a big black crab dangling on his finger. Beside him, Jay's sister, Mina, shivered violently and covered her eyes with her hands, terrified. Jay knew that she disliked the crabs and absolutely hated the way they snapped their ugly pincers. Jay shrugged. Crab hunting was supposed to be Mina's job, too, but she was too scared to put her hand underwater.

Jay had tried several ways to try and persuade her to do it, but she never would. Once, Jay had been so frustrated that he had grabbed Mina's hand and pushed it underwater all the way up her arm, drenching the sleeve of her polka-dot shirt with water. Mina had screamed so loudly that Jay had been sure that the people from Mexico could hear it. Jay sighed. *When will Mina ever learn the courage to stick her hand underwater and will Mina ever stop being a scaredy cat?* There was one good thing about Mina, though. She was very obedient. Then, Jay got a plan.

"Mina, come here," Jay said, wishing that he didn't sound too suspicious.

Mina cautiously sidled towards him.

"Sit here," Jay directed her, patting to a space beside him.

Mina sat down obediently and stared at the black and murky water with disgust.

"Now, stick your hand in there," Jay said, pointing at the water.

Mina shook her head fiercely, her eyes bulging with fright. Jay glared at her.

"Do it or else I'll force you to, like last time," Jay said, clenching his teeth.

Mina stared back at him and at the water. Finally, she stuck her finger out and skimmed the surface. Mina looked at Jay. Jay shook his head.

"All the way," he said.

Mina dipped her whole finger in, shaking the water from it later. Jay dodged the sprays and tried one last time.

"Stick your whole arm in," he ordered.

Mina stared back at him like a terrified puppy and whimpered pitifully. Then, she slowly stuck her arm into the water, inch by inch. After she stuck her whole arm in, she issued a little scream and yanked her arm back out, and hanging on the end of her finger was a little red crab. Jay clapped his hands gleefully and congratulated his sister. Mina slowly relaxed and allowed Jay to pull the crab off her finger.

*You can be brave, too, Mina.* Jay smiled at his sister, and Mina smiled back.

**by Xinyi Wang** (Grade 6)

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# THIRD PRIZE

## Night of the Pumpkins

A WOLF HOWLED. Feet scampered across the cobblestones. A thump and a high-pitched laugh, and everything went black.

April awakened in her cramped attic bedroom. Her cat, Midnight, raised his head. *What's the matter with you?* he mewed.

"I must be hearing things," April mumbled. "It's just a dream." She stood up, almost bumped her head on the low ceiling, then opened her curtains and let a ray of sunlight in.

April headed downstairs, Midnight in her arms, to the kitchen for some breakfast. She gave Midnight his kibble and made herself some cereal. Then, she remembered—it was Halloween! She'd bring her wand trick-or-treating, even though she had no magic. The rest of her family were witches and wizards, but she wasn't. Still, better to be safe than sorry. She could still terrify people with it if they threatened her, even though she couldn't actually use it.

That night, April grabbed a pillowcase for candy and a water bottle and headed out the door. She always started trick-or-treating at six o'clock and ended at ten thirty. This year was no different. Midnight on her shoulder, April headed into the night.

The first house was a small one, but she got jumbo chocolate. When she looked back, she could've sworn she saw the pumpkin move. *April, that's strange*, Midnight warned. *Maybe we should go back home.*

"No, Midnight. We're staying out." Midnight half hid behind April's hair.

They hit up dozens of houses, and at almost every one, the pumpkin didn't seem to stay in one place. Then, a really strange thing happened. As April walked down an alley unlit by anything, an orange glow materialized, bathing her in its light. She spun around, and a pumpkin with a face that gave her the heebie-jeebies was there. It was suddenly joined by many others. April turned around to run but saw more pumpkins. Frightened, Midnight jumped into April's pillowcase, spilling water.

The pumpkins that had been advancing stopped. Drops of water had landed on a few pumpkins, and they fizzled and went dark. "Of course!" April whispered. "Water puts out flames!" She splashed water on her other side, and the pumpkins there stopped as well. She vaulted over the low alley wall and ran. The pumpkins pursued her, and though she ran, April could not escape.

Soon, she was surrounded by a circle of pumpkins. Her water bottle was empty. Then, a humongous pumpkin with a leering face rose. April shakily pointed her wand at it, trying to summon even the tiniest bit of magic. Then, the impossible happened. A tsunami of water poured out of April's wand onto the pumpkins, extinguishing their light.

April was safe . . . for now.

**by Annabel Derksen** (Grade 5)  
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# THIRD PRIZE

## Mount Math Test

“I AM NOW going to hand out your math test.”

*Mrs. Vara’s a witch!* Katharine glanced around. *Doesn’t anyone else notice what she’s doing? Help!*

“You may begin.”

*Nooo! I haven’t written my will!*

“Question 1: Use the four-step method—”

*Four-step method?*

Kate took four steps to the mountain. Its form of twenty-five levels loomed over her body, making her seem no bigger than a thumb! At the top, an outline of a witch appeared between the clouds, and Witch Vara’s voice echoed down in evil laughter, “Start.”

“Okay,” Kate whispered and began to climb.

Every so often, a huge root of a tree would trip her, but she managed to stay upright! But by the time she came to level 14, her hands were red, raw, and sore from grasping the rope and rock face while climbing. Her legs were unmovable, they were so tired, and she stopped often to rest.

As Kate paused to catch her breath near one of the caves, growling surrounded her, and two huge, gleaming amber eyes appeared. Kate tried to scramble back, but it was too late.

“I am Ratio,” it growled fiercely, pawing the ground.

Kate shrank a bit. This was beyond her! Forcing her numb legs to work, she turned around and began to run, him in pursuit, never realizing that they had fallen into a rabbit hole and were winding ’round it, while Ratio laughed, knowing that when Kate realized, she’d come running back straight into his jaws.

In time, Kate did realize, and her tired feet slowed to a stop, despair choking her. The lion was slowly advancing on the ramp that held the only exit. The rabbit hole grew. Kate shrank.

Then, the lion pounced. “Just give up,” Ratio spat.

Stubbornness lent courage to Kate’s soul and speed to her legs. “Never!” she shouted, and she ran up.

It seemed an eternity until she finally reached daylight, thinking carefully about how to defeat Ratio, so that when the lion finally came up, she was ready and defined *ratio* quickly and confidently.

Ratio disappeared, and Kate found herself facing level 15. But after the lion, everything seemed easier, and soon Kate was at the top. She trusted herself now, and all the dangers moved aside for her. Even Witch Vara respected Kate and banished everything that Kate had gone through, leaving just the steep downward slope.

*But I won’t worry about that now, not until she says—*

“I’ll return some of the marks that you’ve gotten by the end of today.”

*Oh, no.*

**by Evalyn Ho** (Grade 6)  
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