

FIRST PRIZE

How the Ship Sinks

My poppycock life, a shattered spectacle
Of a child breaking a flowered vase.

We watched together the ballooned tangerine octopus
Skid across the salty sky,
Leaving behind a splattered inky night—

Your mind too fogged with your
Warm current of happiness
Or the cold updraft of despair,
Enough to lose the strongest fleet;
My own battalion at a loss in the sea it once knew.

Was it your daggered teeth that caused the octopus to flee?
A magnifying-glass vision, enough to see
The scorched marks of your venom tongue.
They've sprinkled the barren wasteland like ash raining from the sky.

I longed to wear a flowing cape of red and gold.
You tore it into ribbons and watched them flutter in the wind.
With it, you grazed my heart, a trenched gash of burgundy,
Stitches of fortitude—for that, I thank you.

by Kaylie Borntraeger (Grade Nine)
Southpointe Academy
Delta, British Columbia

FIRST PRIZE

I Will Be Your Canary

You forgot

Me. But I can't
Forget you. You plucked

My feathers, making a pillow for
Your head. You throttled

Innocence in a dimly lit
Cage, barbed wire snaring my

Feathers. You only praised
My songs in a coal mine, waiting—

For it to cease. But I can't
Forget; it hurts to just remember to

Forget. You chained forget-me-nots to
My blood-stained feathers. And

Malevolence corrupted your
Laughter, vanquishing the song of

A caged bird. I covered in
Your shadow, so I wouldn't

See my blood. I trampled
My wings you chained to

The stake and
Burned. I burned in the remnants of

A memory; and I
Remembered. I remembered that

I couldn't
Forget.

by Ella Davidson (Grade Ten)
Langley Fundamental Middle/Secondary School
Langley, British Columbia

FIRST PRIZE

Slow Train to Ikeda

My father left me before I could spell,
but I grew up writing poems about him,
each word paying for each strand of chromosome
he had left at my doorstep.

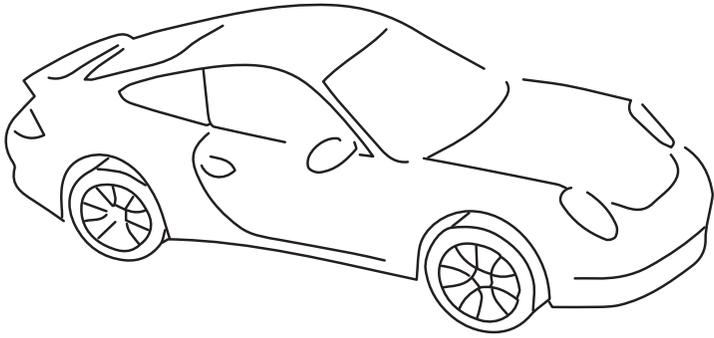
But he is not here, I'm on a slow train to Ikeda,
the seats on this train are spinach green.
Outside, all the sounds in the town are drained
from underground pipes,
people are cooking rice in their miniature houses,
steam rising up chimneys, tinting the clouds hues of orange,
cracking up a little entrance to heaven.

As I sit here, on a seat
as green as traffic lights,
I try to hear your voice
and feel the soft fuzz of your hair.
The present feels so alive,
the tangibility of it might leak
and flood the carriages of this train.

Maybe you, too,
are on a slow train to Ikeda,
one that departed
three minutes before mine.

Maybe my father is waiting
at the terminal station,
he couldn't find me all these years, because he was cursed—
stuck in a loop of time.
Standing with the rice-cooking villagers,
on the bleaker end of love,
he waves at me,
his hair looking as grey as his eyes.

by Grace Liang (Grade Eleven)
Brentwood College School
Mill Bay, British Columbia



FIRST PRIZE

selling me never

there's a used car salesman living in my head
he's practical, he's cynical // he's dangerous, despicable
he's never going to let me rest // he's never going to let me go

he asks me
“have you ever really lived?”

never have I had amaranthine beauty take my breath away
like iridescent lights splattered against a star-sky canvas
or endless snow in endless day
I've never risked everything to stand atop a sleeping mountain
or splashed around in sun-kissed puddles
let a storm drench my soul—let myself *let go*
I've always listened to the salesman

he asks me
“have you ever really loved?”

never
because true love is supposed to last, it's not supposed to slip away
I was taught to believe in reality, in tangibility, in the practicality of a well-learned mind
because yearning only beckons heartbreak—it's hard to love when you're afraid

debt collectors don't wait for periodic payments, and the only kind of car I want is
the one I can't afford—the one the salesman drives; he calls it “UnrealisticDreams”
and tries to sell me “ColdLogic”

he asks me
“have you ever really lived?”

once
but this used car salesman, whose voice I've learned to hate, has set up shop—
he'll never leave his residence in my brain—he tells me I should grow up
that this asynchronous development between my mind
and my heart must end, that I'm crazy to want more
and haven't I always listened to the salesman?

there's a used car salesman living in my head
he's practical, he's cynical // he's dangerous, despicable
he's never going to let me rest // and I don't know how to let him go

by Linda Xia (Grade Twelve)
Fraser Heights Secondary School
Surrey, British Columbia

SECOND PRIZE

Silver Clouds and Golden Storms

Outside a classroom window, the wind blows fierce,
The snow falls on mountains, landing softly.
Flakes twirl like dancers.
They bump clumsily, caught in a swirling white chaos
Parachuting from the clouds.
The winter ground is frosted.

Inside a classroom, in the warmth, children freeze.
Locked in a storm of their own, a chaos of clumsy numbers and words,
They don't spare a glance out the window.

From the corner of the room, a young girl watches,
Alone in her daze, solitary oblivion.
Her eyes follow the storm, and she hums along to the snow's frantic dance.

Her eyes close, and she can feel it, the snow and the cold.
The classroom is gone, and the world,
Her world is a snow globe.

Delicate flakes cling to her lashes and frost her hair
As she spins in a circle, slowly, tasting the sugar-frosted winter.
The world is fragile and silent, the world is a snow globe.
The world is silver, but it feels golden.

The silence is graceful somehow, and if you look up,
The sky could almost be falling.
Finally, the snowfall slows until
Flakes seem to drift rather than fly.

The snow globe cracks and shatters.
With the snow goes her reveries, too, and soon,
As her eyes open again,
She is back in the classroom.

It's warm inside, but she's frozen.
And as she turns to her page, a single snowflake melts—
Cold and sweet
From her lashes—and drips to the paper below,
A final memory of the world outside the window.

by Emma Wallace (Grade Nine)
Ste. Agathe Academy
Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, Québec

SECOND PRIZE

Winter

Starts small—
cold wind biting,
frost crystallizing,
snow flakes falling.
Will you always be cold?
Then, it grows—
wind blows harder, harder;
snow falls faster, faster.
Will you always be cold and hard?
Then, it sets—
white wall of snow,
endless frozen sheets of ice.
Will you always be cold, hard, and frozen?
Can't take one step forward,
can barely breathe.
Will you always be cold, hard, frozen, and lifeless?
Wishing for the sun to come and warm me,
waiting for summer to come and melt this ice.
Will you always be this cold, hard, frozen, and lifeless winter?
Will the wall of ice ever break?
Will your frozen heart ever melt?
Will you always be cold, hard, frozen, and lifeless?
Watching for a sign of spring,
waiting to hear your heart beating.
Will you always be cold, hard, and frozen?
I'm still holding on,
trying not to get blown away by icy blasts.
Will you always be cold and hard?
I'm here, waiting for spring.
Will you always be cold?
After all,
it started small.

by Katie Martin (Grade Ten)
North Toronto Christian School
Toronto, Ontario

SECOND PRIZE

Who Taught You to Be Small?

you think your flaws ruin you,
but that's not true at all.
you shouldn't hide behind them.
who taught you to be small?
your body was once a bare canvas,
but you add to it as you grow.
there is some empty space
for the places that you'll go.
the scars and freckles are a map
on your own skin,
a masterpiece of memories,
showing where you've been.
the things you don't like about you
are the things that make you fall,
but you must get back up again.
who taught you to be small?
sometimes you hate your voice,
so you put it far away,
but people need to know
that you have things to say.
the things you see as flaws
should instead make you stand tall.
remember you are powerful.
who taught you to be small?

by Tomikah Morrell (Grade Eleven)
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Delhi, Ontario

SECOND PRIZE

Circus

Being with you is like being at the circus.
Your buzzing laughter
emanates from red and white tents,
and your kisses leave a buttery sweet taste
of kettle corn dancing on my lips.

Seems as if the clowns' big red noses
are mimicking my blushing cheeks.
It feels as though I have third-degree burns on my face.

You're awfully good at the carnival games,
you won me a stuffed animal,
but the prize I really want is your heart,
and I feel so close to winning it.

You're a lion tamer,
and like the crowd,
I *ooh* and *ahh*
when the big brave beast comes around
to jump through the flaming hoops.

Despite the wonderful show you put on,
I'm really the one jumping hoops for you.
The flames burn my skin,
with the reminder of you.

For, I was only looking for whimsy,
but all you gave me were the tricks up your sleeve
and our distorted reflections in the fun-house mirrors
sneering back at me.

Now, the tents are dismantled,
and the circus drives away.
You leave with it,
because your heart belongs to the circus stage—

Not me.

by Madeleine Avery (Grade Twelve)
Craig Kielburger Secondary School
Milton, Ontario

THIRD PRIZE

Humankind

He opens the draft letter with furrows on his brow,
Burdened with the heavy knowledge that it's all different now.

He puts on a brave face and takes his final steps away—
Away from his wife and kids, hoping for a better day.

Many miles away, a soldier prepares to sacrifice,
Hoping that his actions will be enough to suffice.

Different sides of a border separate the two,
But it is similar experience they each will go through.

They stand on opposing lines to smother each other,
When humankind was supposed to be sister and brother.

The man thinks of his family, wishing to stay;
A bullet hits his skull, determining a dire last day.

The other man lives, though will be forever haunted
By memories of death that he never could have wanted.

Frightfully forced, never will he forget about the people he shot,
About the ones whom he wounded and those whom he fought.

The two people on different sides of the border:
One gone forever, one with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Skip forward three months, near the end of the war,
Bodies scattered askew on the blood-filled floor.

The man's family hears the news, with crying shouts,
And they find a flood of tears where they wish could be drought.

We shall forever thank those who gave their lives,
Leaving orphaned children and widowed wives.

We can walk in the park because they walked to their deaths,
Giving for our lives right until their final breaths.

by Eleanor Love (Grade Nine)
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Calgary, Alberta

THIRD PRIZE

A Long Way from a Love Note

Mesmerizing.

That's the only word I can use to completely describe the transcendent beauty he radiates. Like the Sun that every planet revolves around, they may not even know or appreciate it, but I do.

I know of that Sun, the source of light

that illuminates even the darkest of days in my idle, sorrowful life.

I appreciate that star of day, which keeps everything together and never complains. I love it.

Even though its beauty is vaster than any nebula or universe ever could be, and a mere, sordid creature like myself most definitely doesn't deserve the right to love it, I love it.

I love that Sun. I love that dazzling boy—

my dazzling boy.

by Colleen Bayati (Grade Ten)

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Coquitlam, British Columbia

THIRD PRIZE

Leaves of Rosemary

My best friend is a book.
It isn't the first one you notice in a bookcase.
It's hiding in the corner of a bookshelf, behind a few other novels.
It isn't as imposing as a dictionary or as colourful as a magazine;
You really have to look for it to find it.
Its cover doesn't stand out.
It is simple, discreet, and very delicate;
Everything about it has been carefully designed.

My best friend is a book.
Its title is unusually long, still every word in it is important and meaningful.
The back cover is interesting, but it doesn't say everything.
No summary will ever give you the whole story;
You will never truly understand its meaning without reading all its chapters.

My best friend is a book.
She is a novel you've had for years, read at least fifteen times and know by heart,
Yet you never get tired of it.
You discover new things, notice new details every time you read it,
And they make you love it even more.

My best friend is a book you want to recommend to everyone.
You tell your friends and family how delightful it is all the time,
But you don't like lending your own copy to anyone,
Because not everyone is as careful with their books.

My best friend is a book that you carry with you everywhere, like a lucky charm.
It has survived through pouring rain, coffee, and ripped pages.
You may find an old movie ticket or a photograph as you flip through its pages.
You doodle in it when you're bored.
You use it as a notepad too;
Therefore, it is full of phone numbers and dates you didn't want to forget.
It's not a book that you lose or give away.
It's a book that you keep forever, to read to your children and grandchildren.
You cherish it because it's your most prized possession.

by Mariane Vinson (Grade Eleven)
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Montréal, Québec

THIRD PRIZE

On Days like This

During the 365 days of the year,
There are times when the rays of the sun
Warm my drained face and thaw my rigid heart,
Supplying life back into my veins and
Embracing me with its infinite love.

During the 365 days of the year,
Occasionally, the sweet scent of flowers
Fills the fresh air, tinting the atmosphere with the
Pink nostalgia of fluttering hearts, shy smiles, and
Rosy cheeks.

During the 365 days of the year,
Sometimes a bucketful of cold rain
Pours on my head, soaks through my heart,
And gushes to my feet, sweeping away with it
The warm droplets of regrets and anguish
In the currents of a deep, churning river.

During the 365 days of the year,
Today is a day where soft, light snow
Tumbles noiselessly onto the brown soil,
Covering the world with an icy blanket
That freezes the remnants of melancholy
Lingering in my glistening eyes.

On days like this,
I feel your warmth in my hands,
I see your smile in the dark streets,
I call your name into the empty air.

Memories of you, of us,
Flood through my veins,
On days like this.

by Jung Hee Park (Grade Twelve)
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