

FIRST PRIZE

Return

Your kind eyes bright and gleaming
Oh, how I miss them
Gazing down upon me

Your comfortable presence and kind spirit
You're but a faint memory in my mind
A memory fading more and more by the day
Memories of you that were once ingrained in my mind are now quickly fleeing

I lie restless
Hungry waiting for your return
It's been years, I'm desperate
Are you ever coming back?

Each day becomes more and more difficult to fill this empty void in my heart
Growing bigger and bigger each day
It hurts
I can't keep feeding the void
Nothing works anymore

We need you; we miss you
I need you
I needed you
Why'd you leave at a time like this?

You know it was far too soon
But why didn't you do anything about it?
Why didn't you say anything?
Surely you had to have known the end was approaching

I miss your soft and gentle hugs
I miss you tucking me in at night
As you leaned and whispered, "I love you"
I'll never get to hear those words again escape your mouth
They're but a faint memory
Fading more and more by the day

I'm still waiting for your return
I always will be

by Gianna MacFarlane (Grade Nine)
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FIRST PRIZE

Unmoving

Are they moving past me?
Do the seasons pass me by?
I am moving forward,
Still and stuck, no matter how I try.

Winter comes; cold and frozen, I sit.
They are crossing me, happy and glad,
And yet I am still cold.
I lie, gloomy and mad.

The time moves past me,
As I move forward through it.
And yet, I am heavy and solid,
Unable to move, not even a bit.

Summer comes and with it the sun.
Again, they cross me, excited and dumb.
Here I burn, sweating and paralyzed,
Sitting in what isn't quite sadness, have yet to cry.

My fingers feel the soft flesh of my face.
My brain instead feels as dry as stone,
Completely hollow, no bone.
Unmoving, I sit. Unfeeling, I lie. I leave not even a trace.

An empty place of mine goes unnoticed,
As they all settle in, content and resting.
But forward I go, searching for feeling,
And still I am unstirring, untouched.

by Damian Gonneville (Grade Ten)
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FIRST PRIZE

The Bottle inside My Chest

There's a bottle inside my chest,
and it's going to explode.

Day after day,
it fills to the breaking point.
I start to screw on the cap,
but it's too late.

Everything overflows.

I try to hide the mess,
with empty smiles
and faded laughs,
but the jagged bits of glass
have left scars on my heart.

How do I fix this?

Maybe if I try
to glue it back together . . .

Piece by piece,
it slowly resembles what it once was.

Everything is under control
until it cracks.

I hold it together the best I can,
but nothing seems to contain
the emotions running down the sides
of the bottle inside my chest.

by Sarah Offor (Grade Eleven)
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FIRST PRIZE

Di-del-phis

You and I collected his grey form,
I cannot help but anthropomorphize the little beast.

So we carried him,
And I felt so sad
(Face washed by the ebb and flow of my salty sea)
Because those who are truly free are not meant to be moved by human hands.

Though as I held him, I wished deeply that I could weep,
With the murmur of my heart
Speaking to him,
Telling of boiled eggs and sliced pears I would have fed him if he had wished to eat.

As I pedalled away on my bicycle
I hoped he knew
That not all of us could hurt something, else we feel a ripple of sourness
For not displaying our most sacred form of love.

Then, in the forest behind my house,
I dug a hole with my hands.
And when you helped me lower him down to safety,
I coiled his pink snake tail
And knew sincerely that his jointed bones were just like the ones in my fingers.

You watched me alone as I warmed his body with cedar chips
Until he was tucked away.

As an epitaph, a symbol of my apology, I laid tree branches atop him.
I swore with destruction atop and below,
I would protect and conserve.

When I feed the possums, I leave strawberries for him,
As we all deserve to taste the sweetness
Of unconditional love.

by Rhianna Buck (Grade Twelve)
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SECOND PRIZE

Life as a Teen in Quarantine

Dusty pictures and forgotten dreams
Half-finished projects and leftover dishes of ice cream
Clothes that were long ago planned to wear
Now confined to life hanging over a chair

Hours of television watched on repeat
Missing half because of all the times I fell asleep
One-hour conversations every few weeks
No more hanging out or saving someone a seat

Acing video games but forgetting how to speak
Not knowing what I want and blindly trying to seek
Panicking whenever leaving my cave
Hiding behind the mask, fearing another wave

So much education wasted and not learned
My routines were gone, down a worse path they turned
Times are hard, but I will pull through
Some day like a bird, I will be free and fly too

by Ari N. Bhaskar (Grade Nine)
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SECOND PRIZE

Getting Back to It

They've given up,
I see it in the actor's eyes,
And poet's poems,
And musician's hands.
I see it in the way children walk instead of run,
How teenagers speak too silent or too loud,
How adults do nothing at all.
I see it in every milkshake left unfinished,
In every cocktail drank in a hurry.
A starving man looking for love,
A rich man looking for love,
Flesh seeking more than flesh—
Always seeking more than flesh.
The joyless rhythm of a schedule
Mocks the concept of song,
Silence in the absence of music
Blistering the ears of man.
No love, no transcendence,
Mortal mediocrity.
The prodigy feels pretentious,
The dullard feels useless,
Neither finding happiness.
Every person on Earth sighing,
Every person on Earth closing their eyes,
Rubbing their brow,
Hunching their shoulders,
Thinking over and over,
What am I doing?
And then getting back to it.

by Joel Loeffler (Grade Ten)
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SECOND PRIZE

The Lost

They lie in the dark
Alone, thinking no one will ever find them.
Now, they walk together.
They walk with the bears for courage
To keep moving forward.
They walk with the turtles to find the truth.
And we stand together to find the others
Who still wait to be found.

by Kainsley Swampy (Grade Eleven)
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SECOND PRIZE

Weighed Down

Still living,
But the frost on my petals
Is heavy.
I can feel the coldness seeping through—
Roses turning to shades of blue.

The stem grows weaker.
I can no longer hold
This layer that was bestowed
By nature on my petals.

Pointed to the ground,
My leaves now a fragile ice,
Drooped from the weight,
Ready to break.
A gust of wind is all it takes
To determine this—alive but frozen—flower's fate.

Clear beautiful blue.
You wouldn't notice the struggle
Until one petal
Lies in black and white.

The sun is needed
To take this frost away;
However, days have been night.
The frost has thickened,
And the snow has piled—
I have seen others fallen.

Unlike the ice,
The future is not clear.
Will I always face the ground?
Maybe one day—
With the light from the sun—
I will no longer be
Weighed down.

by Anna Cook (Grade Twelve)
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THIRD PRIZE

That Is Not What I See

As I stare at my body in the mirror,
I look for imperfections.

My thighs stick together like two best friends.
My stomach is as round as a balloon,
with stretch marks covering me like a tiger-skin blanket.
I am embarrassed to let people see.

I struggle to accept the person looking back.
I compare myself to others.
Guilt is being shoved down my throat
with every bite of food.

As I stare at my body in the mirror,
I look for imperfections.

I hear a soft whisper,
“You look beautiful.”

That is not what I see.

by Alaina Robert (Grade Nine)
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THIRD PRIZE

wax wings

there's something inside me
bubbling up to my bones,
hardening them brittle as sheets of sugar.
i'm fragile as one of those
stained-glass windows hung up high in church
bleeding colour over pale pews of people.

i'd like to think that if i were that sort of glass,
the image formed from refracting colours
would be an angel.
something with wings, hopefully.

the thing inside me stirs,
begins to carve out my insides.
it starts in the middle, hollowing me out,
making windchimes
out of my vertebrae and curving ribs.
once it reaches the rest of me,
i'll be light as a bluebird.

then i'll stretch my arms up, up, up and
if i am lucky enough, my prayers will reach
one of those nameless gods, and
feathers will sprout from my spine;
i'll soar up into the sun and swoop near the seas
until the rot spreads too far.

like icarus, i fall.

when i hit the ground
after the thing inside me has eaten up
all i've left to give,
i am afraid i might burst apart
a shower of stained glass and nightmare-dark ash,
brittle as mine bones are.

by Diane Lee (Grade Ten)
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THIRD PRIZE

Sunshine

I've been told I remind people of sunshine
I think you and I
 have very different definitions of the word
You see, to me
 sunshine means I'm obnoxiously happy
always smiling, always laughing
The do-gooder, the people pleaser
 sunshine reminds me of him
To me, sunshine is something I'm not
 something I'm not sure I can ever be again
It's a box, one that I'm afraid to fit into
Sunshine is the person I was two years ago
 the bright, controlled, smile
That sun is covered by the clouds
I think now, I'm more like moonlight
I'm quiet, reserved, ever-changing
The moon and I, we're old friends
For as long as I can remember
 I've always wished to be like the moon
 to guide people home who are lost in the dark
 to be a shoulder to cry on and an ear to listen
 someone with the ability to help.
When I'm compared to the sun, I cringe and shy away
I don't think I can ever be sunshine again

by Hestia Schwartzenhauer (Grade Eleven)
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THIRD PRIZE

The Valley Below

She looks at the valley below
 takes a deep breath, counting the things she sees
 three broken trees lonely at the bottom
 five fearful horses roaming the stream
 a dog chasing the gophers on the hill

She looks up at the clear blue sky
 and wonders what the clouds feel like
 rolling onto her back, she sighs

She closes her eyes

 A gentle breeze hums through the trees

 Once, the sun shone down on the valley
 below

 That night seemed to last forever
 Time frozen in a loop of sadness and grief

by Brooke Adkins (Grade Twelve)
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