

FIRST PRIZE

The Girl Who Saved the Boy

A RAY OF WARM SUNSHINE peeked in through Tinker’s bedroom window hitting her right in the face. She rolled over and got out of bed. Tinker was the daughter of His Royal Highness, King Sprock. Tinker got dressed and jumped out the window, grabbed onto her makeshift zipline, missed the lever to go to the throne room, and landed right on top of Betty the baker, who was just getting croissants out of the oven. Tinker grabbed a still warm croissant. “Thanks!” Tinker yelled over her shoulder as she scrambled out the door.

Halfway down the stairs, Tinker spotted the servant Ross and started to stare at him. Realizing what she was doing, Tinker stopped staring and quickly hustled back down the stairs.

When King Sprock found out his daughter liked Ross, his poorest servant, he decided he had to put a stop to it. On his bed that night, Ross found a note ordering him to go to the throne room. In the throne room, Ross was surprised to find a ginormous pile of firewood. “Hello?” called Ross into the empty silence. All of a sudden, two of the king’s royal guards dropped from the ceiling and started wrapping him with cloth. A third guard went to work lighting an oil bonfire. Less than five minutes later, Ross was being hung over a deadly fire.

From the back doors, the king appeared with his night robes wrapped around him.

“Help!” shrieked Ross, terrified. “They are—” he yelled but stopped when he realized that King Sprock was nodding and handing over one bottle of perfume to each of the women as payment for their dastardly deed.

From the shadows, Tinker waited for the right time to pounce. While the king was talking to one of the guards, Tinker silently threw a smoke bomb towards her father. Three, two, one . . . *boom!* The smoke bomb sent smoke floating all over the room. “Now!” Tinker whispered to herself. Tinker sprinted towards the fire pit, grabbing one of the guards’ redwood staffs, and she vaulted towards her love.

“What the?” Ross said in disbelief.

“Hold still, worm! I’m trying to save you here!” Tinker yelled at Ross. “Jump!” screamed Tinker.

Not wasting any time, Ross flung himself, with Tinker, out of harm’s way. Just as the smoke cleared, Ross and Tinker scrambled out of view.

As they ran, Ross asked Tinker, “Where are we going?”

“Somewhere where nobody wants to kill you, of course!” Tinker replied, laughing at the obvious question.

In the woods, Ross thanked Tinker for saving him. “Any time, Ross, any time,” Tinker sighed, watching the sun set beneath the horizon.

by Leah Butler (Grade Five)
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FIRST PRIZE

The Trees of the Ocean

I WALK DOWN THE BEACH, my bare feet sliding on the wet rocks. The ocean's waves are big, crashing on the shore. My bare legs are covered in goosebumps, not from the cold but from what is happening in my house right now. Of my mother and sister in tears. Of my mother telling me we are leaving to the mountains. I had fled like salmon from a bear. But I cannot flee from the fact that in two days I will leave the only home I have ever known.

I walk closer to the ocean and let it crash over my feet. Normally it would send a pleasant cold over me that seemed to freeze my worry. Today, it does nothing. Perhaps my feet are numb with fear. I want to dive into the ocean and let everything wash away with the tide. There is no tide in the mountains.

But the biggest reason I am so afraid of leaving this place is my papa. It has been three years since he died at sea, but sometimes it feels like yesterday. I can still feel him lift me up and twirl me around.

He had been going on a fishing trip with his friends. A week later, they all came back without my papa. They told us there was a large storm, and he had hit his head and drowned. It is sad, but I don't believe he is gone. He is still travelling the seas, and though I cannot see him, we are connected by the ocean.

In the mountains, there is no ocean, and he will be gone.

I will be all right if I remain connected to my papa. But I won't be connected to him there, and I need him.

I look at the kelp swirling in the water and the trees swaying in the wind. I remember this morning, my mother telling me that there are trees in the mountains. But they won't connect me to my papa. Or will they? Papa used to call kelp the trees of the ocean. "It's strong and beautiful, just like trees," he would say. "They are like siblings, kelp and trees. They are connected."

Connected. I am afraid that I won't be connected in the mountains. But trees and kelp are connected. So, the ocean and the mountains are connected. My papa and I could be connected. Even if I am in the mountains.

The waves crash on my feet, and I feel the cold. My papa will always protect me. Even in the mountains we will be connected. I will be safe.

by Emily Fleming (Grade Six)
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SECOND PRIZE

Bike for Sale

“BIKE FOR SALE! Bike for sale! Barely used pedal bike for sale! Fifteen dollars only!” Alexander was pretty sure he could scream until his voice went hoarse and still not get any interest in his navy-blue and lime-green bike.

He could remember the first time he’d ridden the bike, when he had lost control of the handlebars and crashed headfirst into one of the many blue recycling bins that lined the alleyway. His mother had been talking with some neighbours and was mortified when she discovered that his front right tooth had been chipped in half. The dentist had to pull that tooth out, and his gums where the tooth had been bled for almost the whole day after that.

A year after that incident, Alex had started soccer and commonly biked there and home on his bike. One day after practice, he had been gliding home down a hill, wind blowing his hair back, when a ground squirrel suddenly popped out of the grass and ran in front of him. Alex had tried to swerve around it but, instead, ran practically right over it. His front wheel popped up and down, hit the ground too hard, and slid over on its side, bringing the bike with it. Alex had let go, so he slid off the seat, and the bike had fallen on top of him, knocking the wind out of him. Luckily, his father had been pedalling on his own bike behind Alex and had seen the whole conundrum, so Alexander had help.

The next morning, when he looked in the mirror, he almost had cried. The left half of his face was scratched up worse than his grandpa’s tractor. A scab right beside his nose had scarred and still showed on his face, flaunting the pain it had given him.

Suddenly, a man appeared in front of the bike, obviously interested in it. He had a black hat perched on his broad forehead and a black suit with the tip of a carnelian tie poking out the top. White socks peeked over the edge of pristinely shiny shoes. His cheeks were tinged a slight shade of pink, and his round face was glistening with sweat. Alex thought he looked as if he’d been absolutely exhausted by the walk across the street.

“Could I have your bike? I’ll pay twenty dollars for it!” He waved a green bill in front of Alex’s nose tauntingly.

Alex made up his mind. “Sorry, sir, it’s not for sale,” Alex said.

The man grunted. “Very well then.” He waddled away.

Alex grabbed his bike and wheeled it to the garage. No bikes would be sold today.

by Danika Hill (Grade Five)

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SECOND PRIZE

Forgiveness

I KNEW THAT ALL FRED CARED ABOUT was his comic books. I knew, but I didn't care. I hunched over his collection and ripped the pages out. I want to make it clear that I had a reason to do this. This was revenge.

This morning, at school, Fred had humiliated me in front of my entire class. I remembered the laughs of my classmates, and I tore the pages again. I paused, looking down at the pages scattered around me. Too late, I became fully aware of the damage I had caused. He had spent all his money on this, and I had destroyed it. "What did I do?" I breathed out.

I heard the front door open. I silently cursed and frantically tried to hide all the evidence.

My brother burst into the room. "Addie, guess what I did today!" We both froze.

"I-I can explain."

His head drooped. I was still frozen in place. My mom appeared in the doorway behind Fred.

"Why?" she implored. I couldn't explain. It seemed so stupid now.

"I'm sorry." That was all I could say at the moment.

She shook her head. "Tell that to him, not me." She left, leaving Fred behind her.

"I'm sorry," I repeated.

"It's okay."

I felt myself getting more and more upset. *Why was he so forgiving? Why couldn't he be mad?*

"Why do you always make me look like the bad guy?" I blurted out. "Why can't you get angry at me?" I got up and pushed past him.

"Addie!" He followed me. I walked out. I needed to breathe. "Adeline, where are we going?"

"Nowhere," I snapped. I could only hear the pounding of my heart. Tears formed in my eyes, but I refused to let them fall.

"Addie?" I ignored him.

Eventually, I stopped in front of a fountain. Through my tears, I stared at the water gushing out of the fountain. That was what my tears wanted to do—fall and fall and fall.

"Addie. . ."

My tears were blurring my eyesight, so I looked away. Then I felt his clammy hand clutch my wrist, and I couldn't hold back anymore. My tears fell, and I sobbed great big, ugly sobs. I cried because I didn't deserve his forgiveness.

"I'm sorry," I managed to say.

"I already said it was okay."

"But this time I'm genuinely sorry." I wiped my eyes.

"I don't know what 'genuinely' means," he responded in a quiet voice.

I burst out laughing, even as tears ran down my face. He joined in as well, even though he probably didn't know what I was laughing about. We earned many stares from nearby pedestrians. I couldn't have cared less.

by Hayley Kwok (Grade Six)
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THIRD PRIZE

Free and Imprisoned

BANG! BANG! BANG!

I scootched closer to Karin, my heart pounding. "It's okay, Renate, everything will be fine." I wanted to believe her, but even I knew whatever was going on upstairs was anything but okay.

"Mutter? Is it true? That the Russians are the ones making a racket upstairs?" I asked hesitantly.

"I do not know, darling, but Karin is right. Everything will be fine." I looked at Mutter's kind face and tried to believe it would be okay.

CRASH! BANG! SMASH! More footsteps, more broken glass.

"Try to sleep, Renate," Mutter told me. I hated sleeping in the storm cellar, yet it seemed to be becoming a routine more and more every day. The dim candle, our only source of light, was casting strange shadows across the bland grey walls as I wrapped myself in a thin blanket and tried to fall asleep. But every time I started drifting off, more sounds echoed throughout the house.

Once I finally got to sleep, I woke up to someone pounding on the cellar door. My head spun. *Who is at the door? Is Vater out of hiding? Is it the Russians?*

"Mutter?" I whispered. "Mutter?" I said a little louder.

"*Shhh . . .*," Karin said. "If they find us, they'll take Mutter!" she explained quietly. I nodded my head and looked around. I saw Mutter sitting silently, biting her nails.

Then suddenly, the door to the storm cellar fell inwards, and a bright light shone onto our faces.

"Where is Herr Beckette?" a man in uniform asked, speaking with a heavy Russian accent.

"I don't know," Mutter said quietly, through tears.

"Tell us where he is hiding and no one gets hurt," a soldier with a gruff voice said, nodding towards Karin and me. Karin clutched me close to her chest.

"I don't know where he went! He left this morning!" Mutter yelled.

"Then it's decided, you're coming with us!" the man with the gruff voice said, taking her by the arm and shoving her out of the storm cellar.

"Mutter, don't go! Please! Aren't we free people?" I yelled, struggling to get out of Karin's arms.

"Stay, Renate, stay."

My vision blurred, tears streaming down my face. "Mutter . . .," I whispered.

"She'll be back, Renate, do not worry."

by Abbie Boyle (Grade Five)

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THIRD PRIZE

The Note

RRRING. . . . Everyone jumped slightly as the school bell brought them back to reality, from wherever their minds had inevitably wandered. Their history teacher, Mr. Balasko, signalled for everyone to go to lunch. Her stomach grumbling at the thought of food, Eloise grabbed her books and sped out of the room.

She stopped in front of her locker, remembering that the principal had informed her that she would be switching lockers with the locker on her right. Eloise tried that one, and sure enough, it swung open, filled with her belongings. She dropped her books in the locker and grabbed her lunch bag. She was just about to close the locker when something odd caught her eye. There, on the door of her locker, was a note.

Eloise first thought was that she must have stuck it there; however, it soon became quite clear that wasn't the case. In a neat, slanted handwriting that definitely wasn't hers, it read, "Next meeting: after school, around the tree." All thoughts of food erased from her mind, she frowned as she made her way to the cafeteria and grabbed a chair.

"Hey," said Gemma, her best friend.

"Hi. Gemma, the strangest thing just happened." Eloise explained about the note while Gemma listened intently. Eloise had no doubt that Gemma could solve this mystery.

Once Eloise finished, Gemma nodded thoughtfully. "I wonder. You said you switched your locker with someone else today, so what if the note was meant for the person you switched with?" she said.

It made sense, Eloise decided. "Okay. But now what do we do?" Eloise asked.

"Well, we attend the 'meeting' of course!" she exclaimed.

Eloise sighed. She knew nothing she said could change her mind.

The end of the school day finally arrived. Both friends started to head towards the big oak tree in the forest. They fell silent as they came close. They could make out black-clad figures surrounding the tree. They edged closer, straining their ears. They heard a faint chanting sound.

Suddenly, *crack!* They looked at each other in horror as Eloise accidentally stepped on a stick.

The people started to chase them as they became aware of their presence. As they came closer, they saw that their faces were even more gruesome up close. They had pale, hollow cheeks and sunken eyes, and they opened their mouths to let loose guttural battle cries. Both girls started to run, but they were no match for the large group.

"We're going to get caught, Gemma! What should we do?" Eloise yelled.

The only answer was a shriek followed by a spray of a sticky blue substance.

"Gemma?"

by Rania Naeem (Grade Six)

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