

# FIRST PRIZE

## **Blur into One**

Diamond droplets trickle down  
Enough to make a person drown

Beads of transparent crystal-clear  
Are much more than they appear

Glassy buds fragile like birds  
Hold the weight of a thousand words

Soft, light patterings of the past  
Fall down slow but then fall fast

Opaque bubbles you can barely see  
Ignore all of your silent pleas

Silver drops slowly leak  
Eventually forming tiny creeks

Sometimes tears fall harder than rain  
Trying hard to resist the strain

Drizzling down, they make a mist  
Breaking apart all you've wished

Trickling down one by one  
You never know when they're done

Even the strongest barriers break  
They crack under one too many mistakes

When the downpour has begun  
Raindrops and tears blur into one

*by Marina Xiao* (13 years old)  
Waterloo, Ontario

# SECOND PRIZE

## when everyone left

ice settled atop everything it touched,  
leaving everything a ghostly white.  
fear of frostbite nipped at the back of everyone's minds,  
as the Cold nipped at their unseen fingertips.  
it was a thing of beauty, nevertheless—dangerous, unforgiving, formidable beauty,  
and everyone knew it.

the lake was frozen over,  
a thick sheet of ice separating the dry, chilled air from the deadly sea beneath.  
there was a tale that small fish and sea kelp braved the Cold and lived in the lake,  
feeding off each other.  
but the temperatures were such that no living thing could possibly thrive,  
and everyone knew it.

the skies were bare,  
not a single cloud had dared visit the harshness of the environment.  
everyone was silent:  
it was a miracle how the Cold manipulated the silence and those victims of it already.  
but everything does what it must to adapt to the evolving challenges or face death,  
and everyone knew it.

it was nearly impossible to tell time.  
no one could recognize day from dusk,  
as the numbness of the raw conditions had paralyzed them.  
everyone was vulnerable, weak, and exposed in the Cold's humble company.  
the Cold was a ruler, all else inferior to it,  
and if there was anyone left,

everyone  
would  
know it.

*by Lola Walker* (14 years old)  
Campbell River, British Columbia

# THIRD PRIZE

## Monster

She stared at the covered mirror; *I can do this*, she thought.  
She pulled the fabric cloth that covered it and held her breath.  
Out of instinct, she shut her eyes as every horrible thing they had said to her replayed on repeat.  
They made her picture herself as a monster; something to be locked away and ashamed of.

Not now, though; she slowly opened her eyes.  
She was met with a young girl who had purple-ish bags under her eyes  
And clothes that were draped over her now small, boney figure.  
She was pale and looked sick.  
She wasn't a monster—she never was and never had been.

When she looked down, her body now looked different—  
Not as the girl at school described it,  
Not even in the slightest.  
Tears escaped her eyes as she realized that she wasn't a freak, a monster, or a disappointment.  
She finally realized that she was herself, and no one could change that.

*by Malin Teeple* (13 years old)  
Edson, Alberta

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## A Letter to Childhood

At one, I wished for nothing more  
I fell asleep with a hug and woke up with a smile  
Listening to laughter  
Clapping hands together  
It was all I needed

At seven, I wished to be fifteen  
Ten years left of school  
Plenty of time to decide  
Constant supervision was a bore  
I admired the girls who drove themselves  
Recklessness and freedom  
Were all I hoped for

When you're fifteen  
You have your own money  
Your own space  
Your own life  
I was clueless  
"I wish I weren't treated like a kid"  
How naïve

At thirteen, I learned the truth  
The rainbow lenses in my glasses switched to clear  
Addition turned to algebra  
The smile faded to something fake  
Mirrors brought me agony  
School was a misery  
It was not what I pictured  
The movies I watched with such longing  
Were all a lie  
The greatest deception  
But why?

Now fifteen, I wish to be seven  
Two years left of school  
I still don't have a clue  
"What do you want to do with your life?"  
My response is a stare  
*Who am I?*  
My own reflection tells me nothing  
My pillows are covered in tears  
My mind is covered in bruises  
If I had known all the scars that would surface  
I would have hid every blade of life  
When I see the seven-year-old in the frames at home  
Two words come to mind  
*I'm sorry*

*by Meridian Patenaude* (15 years old)  
Lethbridge, Alberta

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **They Think They Know Me**

My feelings are dismissed,  
I should be grateful for my gifts.  
All of my problems are inconvenient,  
My parents and I never come to an agreement.  
They don't understand these worries are frequent.  
Why should I be anxious with all of my achievement?

I'm so much better at regulation,  
Now I'm focusing on my education.  
Just calm down, it's only one situation.  
Don't have too much communication,  
But don't go silent in isolation.  
All of my thoughts are apparently up for interpretation.  
My dad wants a life for me built on a strong foundation,  
My teachers are impressed with my participation,  
Everyone thinks I'm great at conversation.

What about what I think?  
Everyone else's words are set in stone,  
But mine are scribbled out in ink.  
To them, my thoughts are unknown;  
To me, they are perfectly in sync.

People ask why I'm indecisive.  
I usually sugarcoat the truth with icing.  
But if I'm being honest,  
I think the answer I have harnessed.  
Every time I make a choice,  
I am questioned by the external voice.  
And every time, it influences my inner noise.

*by Aly Whitfield* (14 years old)  
Markham, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## The Biggest Lie

*“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”*  
Is the biggest lie

Because no matter how hard I try  
To get the words people said  
Out of my head  
They still fill me with dread  
They won't go  
They won't leave  
And answer my plea  
They only grow bigger  
And still they linger  
Until I start to believe  
Their words might be  
True

*“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”*  
Is the biggest lie

The mean words will come and beat you like a drum  
But when they come, don't succumb  
You must stand strong  
And prove them wrong  
Don't let them destroy your pride and joy  
Create your own life's story  
Don't let them take your glory  
Don't make their same mistake  
Don't break and take  
But use your words to help and heal  
After all, words can only be forgiven not forgotten

*“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”*  
Is the biggest lie

**by Claire Bisch** (13 years old)  
Waterloo, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Without You, I Am Lost**

Without you, I am lost.  
All these horrid feelings I want to toss.

The heartache and pain I feel for you,  
God, I am sadness, I am tears, I am the blues.

This weight of despair on my chest is unbearable,  
and the smile I put on is no longer wearable.

I just want to feel your arms wrapped around me.  
I'm drowning in sadness, a great wide sea.

I can no longer walk around pretending to be all right.  
I need to be saved, where is my knight?!

My knight in shining armour to save me from my sadness,  
but all I see right now is a void full of blackness.

My heart has been frozen for so long, I don't know if it will ever defrost,  
because without you,  
I am lost. . . .

*by Olivia Jonas* (12 years old)  
Waterloo, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Sculptured**

I am sculptured  
People chisel me with their actions and words

Some people give marks that leave me ruptured  
Some people fix those marks

Some people are gentle with the chisel  
Some people use the chisel as darts

I was once a dull statue  
But now I've been shaped to a person

I was once brand new  
But now I'm extravagant

Each mark signifies a story  
A story about an experience  
Each mark is a glory

In the end, I choose who I will be  
But I must fix the mistakes made on me

*by Aileen Dhaliwal* (11 years old)  
Woodstock, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## At the Beach

You've been to the beach,  
But have you ever noticed  
How relaxing it is  
To listen to the sounds of waves lapping the shore?

That sound  
Is snow,  
Gently flurrying to the ground  
The way feathers and leaves  
Falling from the trees  
Is like a breeze  
Blowing through the emerald treetops,  
The leaves whispering to each other  
*Rustle, rustle.*

Sometimes, a piece of driftwood  
Washes up and lodges in the sand.  
One would pick it up,  
Carefully examining its surface,  
As smooth as a mirror,  
Its texture,  
As polished as a gemstone.  
Crooked,  
It contains a natural beauty  
That no man-made structure can match.  
Then, as one looks up and puts down the wood,  
They realize that the waves are still rustling,  
Licking the wet, solid sand,  
Decorating it with kelp  
And fragments of purple shells like an artist.  
How long had the waves been sculpting  
Their special creation?  
A millennium? More?

As one walks down the beach,  
They notice  
That the water seems to have  
A kind of living strength,  
Determined to continue  
Even after the forests have fallen,  
All signs of life extinct,  
The hardest rocks worn down to pebbles,  
That living strength in their watery veins  
Howling like a tempest,  
Cascading down like  
The swift white-water rapids  
Or the colossal Niagara Falls  
But sometimes also serene  
Like the lakes  
In the mountains, calm and deep,  
Smooth and reflecting like a mirror.

*by Isabella Chen* (10 years old)  
Richmond, British Columbia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **You Will Always Be My Friend**

To honour the memory of my friend DanDan.

You have gone quietly.  
From now on,  
In the blooming spring,  
You are the most beautiful flower.  
In the breezy summer,  
You are the nearest cloud.  
In the golden autumn,  
You are the evergreen tree.  
In the snowy winter,  
You are the goose that goes away late.  
When the wind blows my long hair,  
I hear you singing a pretty song.  
When the sun sets,  
I see you've painted the sky red.  
When the night falls,  
I dream of your sweet smile.  
Mom said you are the brightest star in the night sky.  
No matter how time passes,  
You will always be my friend,  
You will always be in my heart.

*by Emily Xu* (9 years old)  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Nature**

### *Haiku*

frigid cold mountain  
snowflakes fall and cover trees  
smooth icicles form

rushing waterfall  
rocks and sand get swept away  
a rainbow appears

sneaky, clever crow  
spreading its agate wings  
snatches food from plates

tiny maple seed  
becomes a big maple tree  
dies and starts again

fawns and their mother  
share bonds that can't be broken  
by a simple thing

calm, soothing river  
colourful fish leap  
the water sparkles

salmon swim  
try to reach the ocean  
they keep trying hard

**by *Mirabelle Ai*** (8 years old)  
Vancouver, British Columbia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **The Tree and Deer**

The snow is falling  
Landing on the tree and deer  
Happy together

*by Fynn Coleman* (7 years old)  
Sooke, British Columbia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Kiwi**

Kiwi fruit is so juicy and sweet  
It is so nice to eat

It is round and green  
But it doesn't have much protein

I used to like it a lot  
But now I do not

*by Llewyn Rogerson-van Stam* (6 years old)  
Kitchener, Ontario

# FIRST PRIZE

## Fresh Sliced Sashimi

NINE-YEAR-OLD JULIAN, who had inherited his billionaire fortune from his deceased grandfather, had bought a rocket ship called *The Adventurer*, which was hurtling through the sky, heading to Mars. He squealed with joy, like a pig thrashing in mud, forcefully shaken and tossed around as the sound of the engines blared through his ear protection. Nevertheless, he wore a permanent smile on his face as he realized his dreams were coming true, giving his thumbs-up to his fellow crewmates, Mathew and Nikkie, sitting on either side of him.

His eyes expanded to twice their size, and goosebumps formed on the outside of his arms. He was aware they would be the first to land on the red desert planet, planting the most beautiful flag of his world, adorned in red and white, emblazoned with the maple leaf in its centre.

As darkness enveloped them, they turned off the engines, and they were left hanging in the deepest depths of space, looking down on Earth.

“So, dudes and dudettes, what is for dinner tonight? Is it A5 Japanese Kobe beef topped with white sturgeon caviar with a side of crème de la crème pommes frites?” Julian grinned like a sheep and fluttered his eyelashes, staring imploringly at his co-pilot, Mathew.

“First of all, I’m not a dude, and she’s not a dudette. Second of all, here’s your dinner.” Mathew reached into a small compartment to his side, pulled out a disposable package labelled “FRESH SLICED SASHIMI.”

“Fresh? Wasn’t that pre-packed in a factory a few months ago?”

“Sir, this is as gourmet as it gets! In fact, no other astronauts have even tried this. You’re the first one!”

“Oh, is that so?” Julian ripped open the package, and discoloured, floppy, meaty bits of flesh resembling what might be fish floated out into the enclosed area. The smell was unbearable, and the pungent aroma streamed through the vents and filtered out of the ship into the unknown.

“We are in deep trouble,” Nikkie, his other co-pilot, remarked dryly.

“I concur. This stench is strong enough to summon the most hideous alien being known to the universe. Would you like to know its name?”

Mathew had gone completely pale. Frowning his eyebrows, clenching his fists, and squinting his eyes, he answered in a very high falsetto voice that trailed upwards like a question, “Yes?”

“They are called . . . smoochies.”

“WHAT? Smoochies! Get out of here. Smoochies, my butt.”

“Yes, they will smooch there too.”

“Huh? Is this some kind of joke?”

“Here they come.”

Mathew put his hands over his eyes and curled his body into a ball. Nikkie did the same.

Julian became uncomfortably tense and looked from side to side, evaluating his dire situation. “Hey, guys, snap out of it! There’s nothing to be afraid of! Really, just look outside. . . .” His voice trailed off as he noticed a huge group of shimmering spheres hovering and approaching ever so slowly and steadily. Then, like a simple bubble from a bubble wand, they clung onto the sides and windows of the ship, and in a matter of seconds, exploded!

Watching in horror, Julian was in shock to see a being emerge from the explosions. It was a purple-coloured, slime-covered, heart-shaped floating organism with a set of massive red lips. In its centre was what resembled a glowing power source.

“Behind you!” shrieked Mathew.

Julian swivelled around, but he was not quick enough to dodge the smoochie’s attempt to lock lips with his, and instantly, they were joined in a deep and powerful kiss.

Then, his neck began to cave in, and his head retracted into his body like a turtle. The same happened to all of his limbs, and his body morphed into the shape of a heart.

“Stay back! Julian, you freak! Leave us alone!” shouted Nikkie.

But he hovered closer to her, and his other smoochie accomplice crept up on Mathew.

In desperation, Mathew dove for the stash of fresh sliced sashimi packets, grabbed one, ripped it open and took a handful of the sashimi and flung himself to the other side of the room, releasing the odorous matter, which attracted both of the smoochies, which followed the stench.

“To the escape pod!” shouted Nikkie.

Mathew darted towards them and yanked open the door. “Get in!” he cried. Shoving Nikkie in, he slammed the door shut behind her.

As they ejected, Julian and his new buddy joyously dined ravenously on the sashimi as they watched Nikkie and Mathew fly away.

*by Julian Lee* (10 years old)  
Vancouver, British Columbia

# SECOND PRIZE

## None Had To

IT BLAZED THROUGH the atmosphere. It curved across the seas in sprays of foam. It landed. Grey and seamless in design, it was rectangular with edges rounded.

One side opened into four folds with a great bout of steam, and out of it came a semicircular tunnel of similar seamless steel.

It was a moment before anything moved. Then it came, the creature. Beyond a mere silhouette. Venturing onto the grass and stepping about the glade. On four white-callused legs, it stood, each possessing four prehensile fingers; its body was rotund and earthy, yet a row of spines gently curved up off the crest of its back and ended in round stubs. This frill of orangish-pink membrane continued over a short broad neck and onto a round head pointed with a sharp fleshy beak like a raven periodically indented with narrow pores. Two eyes glowed white at the top of its face in an otherworldly reaction to the light of an earthly day. Its skin was of a dark pink, and calluses continued across it, growing into a set of bony nubs below its beak. None could imagine what it was adapted for, on a world thousands of light years distant. None would. None had to.

The tunnel retracted into the strange vessel's confines, and it closed into its prior shape. The creature walked again through the soft and grassy glade and down to a small sandy beach flanked by rocks. There below it sat a murky body of water, stirred and discoloured by the activity of the human harbour beyond. Mass machines launched off steel platforms that stretched into the water, their nets and poles draped into the sea. About them walked two-legged things, bipedal, wearing various things over various tones of flesh.

The creature sat there awhile in its still, silent pondering. It could not discern the expressions painted on their strangely shaped faces, but they walked slouched and low and enthralled by boxes of light. It seemed none could look up. None would. None had to.

Behind the stretching steel piers sat more clumps of expressionless metal, stretching high into the sky about webs of asphalt paths. They were great and geometric in nature, broken up orderly by sheets of glowing glass that reflected the light of a distant sun. Between them, on the asphalt, more machines went about driving themselves in exhaustingly perfect order, but the machines were inexhaustible. Within their confines, more bipedal things sat and looked down. They were completely immersed in their own worlds, and yet none were happy and all seemed weary. Fed random content, which they distasted and kept eating. None consumed what they wanted to; none ceased consuming. None would. None had to.

The creature wanted to know them. The creature wanted to help them. It was driven by the same curiosity humankind had before all turned to numb apathy.

It looked up and saw something it had not before: among the smoggy clouds, a bright mote of warm colours lingered. The creature stood on two legs then, withdrawing a binocular-like object from a natural, shallow pouch in its stomach flesh and raising it to its beak. From there, tiny, three-fingered limbs, which extended from its beak, took over, passing the arched binoculars to the thing's eyes. From them, it observed the object cease ascending and begin to tumble down. Trailed by a fiery column, it was long and pointed and made from gleaming steel.

A patrol craft of some sort, it had to be. It was swooping down to observe the creature. The creature continued to observe it, unconcerned with being detected.

The creature scanned the cityscape beyond the harbour and saw that none flinched, even as the craft dipped within fifty metres off the ground.

Thirty metres. None flinched. The craft showed no sign of swerving up or slowing down.

Wisely, the creature stored away its binoculars and ran away from the harbour beach, towards the opposite side of the small isle.

It looked up. The missile was following it—being guided towards it. It realized too late.

The projectile touched down with a massive, outbursting explosion. When the cloud of flames cleared, only ash and smoke remained, drifting around a blackened crater.

None flinched. None sought to ask of its motivations or use any intuition. Violence was easier, in a world where the easier option was the only option. None would observe or control or question or hypothesize. None had to.

*by Smith McSavaney* (15 years old)  
Courtenay, British Columbia

# THIRD PRIZE

## Black and White

“YOU ALRIGHT?”

Cam looks up. A woman he never knew what to call stands leaning on his doorframe. “Yeah. Do you need something?”

She’s quiet. “I read your journal—when you were out yesterday.”

“What?” Cam sputters.

“I’m going to sell the piano,” his former piano teacher says, her voice carefully neutral. “I didn’t know you hated it that much.”

“I don’t hate it,” Cam lies. His mother seems to look right through him.

CAM’S ON THE FLOOR. It’s been nine hours since that conversation, and he hasn’t left the piano room since. His phone’s looping a snippet of a piece he was supposed to learn two years ago. He hasn’t slept yet. His glasses are resting too far up on his face; it almost hurts.

His mom walks in. Cam guesses it’s around seven a.m., the time she normally wakes up for coffee. She starts to cry—maybe he was crying as well.

“I’m sorry, Cam,” his mother sobs. The sound of her voice is raw, and it touches Cam deeper than any key on the stupid piano. “All I wanted was for you to love music.”

“I do love music,” Cam promises. It’s all he can offer her.

The apology was honest, maybe even heartfelt, if Cam knew her better than he did.

She studies his features carefully, analyzing the slackness of his jaw and enlarging of his eyes with a gentle gaze. Cam feels weak under that gaze—a gaze that’s warm with concern, like a mother’s.

Suddenly, Cam feels six again.

At six, he feels bugs crawling up his leg. He wrinkles and turns up his nose at the smell of his mom’s black coffee. He gags at the taste of medicine.

At six, he hears the piano at night, flowing into his bedroom softly under the crack of his doorframe.

At six, he likes it.

*by Sarah Seetoh* (15 years old)  
Richmond, British Columbia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## The Cards You've Been Dealt

I HEAVE MY FIRST SIGH of the day in the driver's seat of an interplanetary bus, eyes fixed on my gold watch in wait for my dreaded departure time. The watch comes from my home planet, and my engraved name, Gilbert, reminds me of my worth on work days like this. Its hand ticks to 07:00, and a notice appears on my dashboard informing me of a collision on my route, spaceway 42-A. I adjust the course to my first stop, a planet known as Plallid.

Plallid's atmosphere looks like a vampire's cheekbone, pasty white with tinges of yellow. The planet is barely more than a wasteland, and the elementary school I bus kids to each morning is located on a station orbiting it. I slice through the sky, pulling down my seatbelt and lowering the gravity settings to accommodate the children.

The kids resemble one-eyed, four-legged purple basketballs, eagerly buzzing around the transport bay. Grunting, I open the door to a whirlwind of dust. The acceleration squishes them to their seats as we take off, but as soon as we reach a steady pace, a shrill voice interrupts me.

"Mr. Bus Driver, sir?" asks a girl.

"What is it?" I say.

"My name is Pler. . . . I'm n-new . . .," she stammers. "Where do I sit? Can I sit by you?"

I furrow my eyebrows. "No. There's no room."

But instead of complying, Pler takes my words as a challenge, tucking herself under the dashboard. "Wrong!" she shouts, "there's plenty of room!"

I open my mouth to stop her, but before I can speak, the bus jolts ahead, veering directly onto spaceway 42-A.

"WARNING, COLLISION AHEAD! PLEASE SLOW DOWN."

I glance down and spot Pler's arms over the gas pedal. I attempt to nudge her aside, but a second alert stops me in my tracks.

"GRAVITY SETTINGS REVERTED. GRAVITY RISING TO MAXIMUM IN THIRTY SECONDS."

I whip around, my eyes nearly popping out as I spot the control panel open, a kid fiddling with the switches.

"WARNING, COLLISION AHEAD. GRAVITY RISING IN TWENTY-FIVE SECONDS! PLEASE SLOW DOWN."

"*Move it!*" I shriek, unclipping my seatbelt. I get a grip on my headrest before I float to the roof, propelling myself forward.

"*Get out of the way!*" I cry, my veins bulging against my skull.

"GRAVITY RISING IN FIVE SECONDS."

I slam the emergency stop button.

"GRAVITY STABILIZED."

I spin back to the front, where the kid on the gas pedal hasn't budged. "*You!*" I scream. From the windshield, the collision pops into view.

"What—"

"*Move and I'll let you sit wherever you want, except there!*"

She jumps aside.

"Good," I continue, "now put your foot on the rectangular pedal close to the one you were sitting on!"

The bus skids to a halt the moment she finds the brake, sending me flying. As my heel connects with the back wall, the front bumper taps against the crashed vehicles. A tremor reverberates through the bus, and the red lights blink off. I slam the control panel shut and hook my foot underneath an empty seat, letting out a deep breath.

I glance at the kid beside me, whose eyelid quivers.

"Mr. B-bus D-driver?" they stammer. "What just happened?"

Boiling up from my diaphragm is a tide of unbridled fury, but it recedes at the sight of my reflection in the teary mirrors of the kid's pupil.

"You fools almost crashed the bus," I say, raising my voice, "but it's under control. And you, up there," I continue, "you can sit up front. You just can't approach the steering wheel, okay? It's dangerous."

The girl nods violently. "Of course, Mr. Bus Driver."

"You can call me Mr. Gilbert," I continue.

The kid at the control panel turns their eyes to the ground, tucking their arms behind their back. "I'm sorry, Mr. Gilbert," they mumble. "Please don't send me home—"

“You’d better not misbehave again,” I interrupt, “but you won’t be sent home this time.”  
Relief floods the kid’s face.

“Everyone, back to your spots,” I order, returning to my seat.

This job was never my first choice. But as I get us back on course, I notice that my gold watch has fallen off. I drive into the dark canvas of space, and the thought crosses my mind that sometimes, you just have to use the cards you’ve been dealt.

And today, I played mine to the best of my ability.

*by Willa Holmes* (14 years old)  
Edmonton, Alberta

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Fishing Competition

ON A BEAUTIFUL FRIDAY MORNING, all you could hear was Ella (a thirteen-year-old girl) yelling at her dad: “Are you crazy! I don’t want to go!”

Her dad was a little surprised by her reaction and thought, *An all-day fishing competition isn’t that bad.*

On the other hand, Ella thought, *I don’t know how to fish, and I’ll be stuck on a boat with my little brother and parents for a day! How much fun could that be?*

The next morning, Ella and her family woke up early and got on the boat. “We should try Grey Hole Island because I heard there are a lot of fish there if we want to win the competition,” said her dad.

“Ugh—whatever, I don’t care!” replied Ella.

“Ella Marie Sommerset! For the love of fish, please be nice to your father!” scolded her mom.

Once they’d arrived at their destination, her dad stopped the boat. Ella’s father helped her, and her brother set up their lines in the water. Minutes later, Ella said impatiently, “Mom! There are no fish here! They’re not biting! This stinks!” Just when her mom was about to reply, Ella yelled out, “Mom! Dad! Help! Now! . . . Get the net! . . . Quick!”

Ella caught the first fish of the day. It was a fifteen-inch walleye. From then on, for the next two hours, her dad caught three fish, her mom one, and her brother caught two more. As for Ella, she had caught six fish during that time. “This is awesome!” announced Ella with excitement. She loved how the rod bent when she caught a fish and the rush it gave her. She felt a great sense of pride every time she caught a fish.

The day went faster than Ella would have wanted. In the end, she caught a total of ten fish. She realized she loved to fish.

When the family got back to the dock, they were all laughing about what had happened throughout the day. Her brother had fallen in the water with his life jacket, her mom was as red as a tomato from suntanning, her dad had lost three fish, and Ella had lost her fishing rod in the water.

The family caught twenty walleyes in total and brought them to the counting station off the dock for the competition. Ella looked around and saw that a lot of boats were arriving with their catches of the day. *Wow!* she thought as she saw two men walking up with over forty fish in their net; however, Ella noticed that the fish looked different from the ones she had caught. She tried telling her dad, but her dad just brushed her off and told her to go back to the boat.

Before heading back, Ella approached the two men and said, “Hi! I’m Ella, and you are?”

“James, and he’s Conner,” replied one of the men nervously.

“Nice to meet you. What area did you guys catch those fish in?” The man ignored Ella’s question and continued to walk to the counting station. She then shouted, “Hey! What kind of fish is that? It looks as if you’ve caught all jacks.” The man continued to ignore Ella. She thought it was very strange that they didn’t want to talk to her, and that their fish were all clean, without any trace of a fight.

As she turned around, she found a paper on the ground. She picked it up and noticed it was a receipt from a fish market. The receipt was for forty fish under the name of Conner Brown. As she ran up to the station to approach the men, the judge was announcing the winner.

“And this year’s winner for the 2023 Fishing Competition is . . . James and Conner Brown! Congratulations!”

Ella quickly yelled out, “No! Wait! They didn’t catch those fish! They’re cheaters! They bought those from a fish market around the corner. Here’s the receipt!”

The judge took the receipt for a closer look. He then dismissed the winners and disqualified them. “And the new winner of this year’s competition is the Sommerset family!” The crowd cheered, and Ella was smiling ear to ear.

Ever since then, Ella and her family continued entering in fishing competitions as a family, and they’ve won over seven competitions together.

Ella was hooked for life.

**by Zoé Hébert** (13 years old)  
Ile des Chênes, Manitoba

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Insult to Vermin

I MISS IT. Soaring through the open air, breathing in the crisp scent of the mountains with a hint of the sea. The musical crunch of landing on powdery snow, the beauty of my talons smearing it red. The call of my mother echoing softly throughout the clear days and the crackle of my father burning fresh pine wood at night. I even miss my fluff-brained brother and his even stupider jokes that sometimes coaxed a laugh from my icy heart.

That was before the humans came in. The first one was avoidable, a cruel curiosity. I would watch him from afar, in a tree, and slowly come up with ways to drive him off the mountain. Before I could do anything, he brought more of them. Soon, they were swarming everywhere like rats. Breeding like them too. Within two or three years, a few of their wyrmlings were hunting our goats and burning our trees.

My brother and I were ready to swoop down, burn them right out of their dens, but our father said no on the basis that we could always just eat the rocks and be fine. I personally didn't love the saltiness of the rocks in our area and was suitably distressed.

"Father! You don't realize that these-these leeches are practically sacks of highly roastable flesh. We could take care of them in seconds." I was snorting smoke at this point, pacing and snarling in righteous rage. Father just shook his head at his temperamental daughter and flew off to search for acceptable rocks.

I did not let it be. Blinded by territorial rage and my offended pride, I swooped off into the night. Brother, the coward he was, both didn't follow me or yell after me. He was afraid of those scaleless worms. I found their nest and belched fire across their hoards. There was a suspicious lack of screaming for vermin being burned to death. That should have warned me against my next move.

I landed in the centre of their den, my eyes narrowed against the smoke. I didn't see the blow that knocked me down. My roars fell on deaf and dead ears as rope was thrown across me. I couldn't see anything through the tears brought forth from the smoke. I tasted blood as I snapped down on one of their spindly fore-talons, the taste masking that of the sleeping herbs. I faded away.

The next time I woke up, I was not in the mountains. There was so much noise for a place with no dragons. Roars that didn't mean anything were constant, and the scream of air past my ears was nearly deafening. I tried to drown it out with my own song, my own words, but there was something holding my snout shut. My talons were clamped to the floor. The sound was too much, too loud—even a proud dragon like myself couldn't stay stoic. I whimpered and began to cry.

It only took me a couple of years to begin to understand a little bit of the human language. It was weird and soft. I hated it and hated speaking it even more. It seemed to ooze out of my mouth, and it stuck to my throat unpleasantly. Even worse, the humans began to poke and prod at me more, no matter how I tried to learn their words for STOP and LET ME GO. I even learned how to guess what they were saying and string words together into vaguely coherent sentences. The humans clapped their hands in delight and kept on hurting me.

I spend most of my time asleep now, thinking about what used to be. I wish I didn't understand the humans most of the time. Knowing what they do with what they learn from my blood and "tissue samples" only makes it all worse. At least they put me into a fake sleep before they test what my acidic blood can do on other animals. Calling these monsters rats was an insult to the vermin.

*by Lizzie Hutten-Czapski* (13 years old)  
Waterloo, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## The Toffee Jar

MOTHER AND FATHER are often too busy with their demanding list of responsibilities to help me with my homework. Most of my subjects are simple, so I'm all right. Yet, English is always different. Every time, I feel it build up inside until it bursts. Faintly, my tears cascade down. *Drip. Drip.* It turns to a plummet of water down my cheeks. I sit for hours at the table, pondering what to write in my weekly journal. But I never start writing. How can you explain your thoughts in words when you can't even understand them yourself?

But, every time, I hear a step—*tiptoe, creep*—and before I get time to look, a toffee is placed on my sheet. I've always been mesmerized by the intricate wrinkles and the vintage look of toffees. I grin. And Granny grins back. Then, she sits with me. Even if it takes hours. Ages. She'll sit with me. Until I create the most breathtaking piece of writing my eyes have ever feasted upon.

Today, I write my first entry without Granny. By the time I reach the hour mark of sitting with a blank page, I expect a toffee to be placed on my sheet. But it doesn't happen. It never will. So, I write on my own.

Everywhere, I notice everything. Like the jar on my teacher's desk that smells ever so familiar. Inevitably, in complete despair, I create a ritual. Every day. When no one's looking. When the lights are dimmed for recess: I step—*tiptoe, creep*—up to the teacher's desk. Her desk is tall; so is her chair. Me? I'm not. I couldn't scramble myself onto that chair even if I persevered. But my fingertips can reach the jar. I marvel at its dainty beauty. It is a round, glossy jar, yet something about it seems fanciful. As the daylight peeks playfully through the blinds, the jar looks like a glowing orb. Its top comes off smoothly, clinking when I place it down. And it's red, like cherry pie on a summer evening. The ones I would savour with Granny, with a soft, fragile crust and a fluffy, sugary interior that, when eaten together, create a whimsical sensation in the mouth. The jar's mouth is wide, so I reach my hand in. I pull out a toffee. And I crinkle—*crinkle, crinkle*—it open. Then, I pop it in my lips. *Swoosh. Swoosh.* My tongue swirls it around the edges of my mouth. The caramel sweetness lingers inside long after I swallow. So I take one more. Then another. But not too many. Or that would be suspicious.

Suddenly, I hear a step—*tiptoe, creep*—and I gasp, instantly turning to the doorway. My eyes are wide open, my body frozen. In the doorway, though it's far too dim to see her face, there's a silhouette. But she leaves quickly. I wonder if it's my teacher. I wonder if she knows her candy reminds me of Granny.

The next day, during recess, I do my usual ritual. I step—*tiptoe, creep*—to the jar. Yet, today, there's a surprise waiting for me. It's not a lock to the jar or even a friendly invitation to the principal's office. It is a caramel toffee in a little tray. With a note. With my name. It tells me, please, to ask next time I want a toffee. But that's not it. It says, in little letters, that Granny would be glad to see I still like toffee if she were here. I beam. Those hours sitting alone at the table has paid off. Because my teacher has read my journal. My newest entry. About Granny. The homely aroma of caramel fills my nose. Although I had stolen it, and that's not acceptable, I believe Granny would be proud of me. *Why?* Because I know I won't stop writing in my journal. Every week. Even when it feels as if my wrist will snap and my lungs are going to erupt from sobbing, I'll write. Until it doesn't feel awful anymore. And I'll get better each time. If I miss Granny too much, I can always step—*tiptoe, creep*—to the toffee jar on the teacher's desk. After asking, of course.

Glancing at the vivid day outside, the warmth of the creeping sunshine embraces me in a tight hug of everything blissful. Glossy jars. Cherry pies. Summer evenings. Crinkled wrappers. Toffees.

So I step—*tiptoe, creep*—out to recess.

**by Samyukta Warriar** (12 years old)  
Edmonton, Alberta

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Becoming a Tracker

ONE, TWO, THREE, four, five, six, seven, and eight. Eight bananas for a troop of eight gorillas that Dian was tracking as an assistant to George, who was a senior tracker. Dian was a twelve-year-old girl who loved gorillas. Her mother was a huge admirer of Dian Fossey, so she named her daughter after her.

Dian placed all eight bananas in her dirty, brown satchel and headed off down the road to the rainforest. Her long, curly, dirty-blond hair protected her neck from getting a sunburn.

In the rainforest, Dian walked around trees, over moss-covered logs, and through patches of green ferns. When Dian reached the amphitheatre where all the junior, assistant, and senior trackers met, she took a seat on a log that was cut into a seat. As soon as George arrived, he sat down next to her.

“Dian, forget about your usual duties this week. I have something special for you.”

“Yes?” Dian answered eagerly.

“Dian, now that you’re twelve, you are officially old enough to become a senior tracker. But in order to become one, you have to show an act of courage and responsibility by the end of the week. Good luck!” George explained.

“Don’t worry, George, I can do it. Thank you so much for this opportunity!” Dian exclaimed gratefully.

Once George left to do his duties as senior tracker, Dian jumped off her seat and darted out of the forest, down the street, and into her house, excited to tell her mom what had just happened.

“Mom! Mom!” Dian screamed and opened the door.

“Honey, calm down. What is it?” Dian’s mom said, grabbing Dian’s hands.

“George said that I am old enough to become a senior tracker, but in order to earn it, I have to show an act of courage and responsibility by the end of the week,” Dian explained.

“That’s so great, honey. I’m so proud of you!” Dian’s mom cheered.

“Bye, Mom. Got to get to work!” Dian ran up the stairs.

Once in her room, Dian took out her notebook and began brainstorming ideas of actions that could show courage and responsibility. *I could feed all of the gorillas in the troop that George looks after to show responsibility. And for courage, I could climb to the top of the banana trees and collect the fruit fresh, even though I’m afraid of heights,* Dian thought. *No that’s not good enough,* she thought discouragingly.

Dian walked downstairs and called, “Mom? Where are you? I need to talk to you.”

“In the kitchen, honey,” Dian’s mom replied.

Dian ran to the kitchen. “Mom, I have no idea of what I should do. Do you have any ideas?”

“Well,” Dian’s mom thought for a moment, “why don’t you go for a walk and maybe something will come to you.”

“Thanks, Mom.” Dian left the house.

Dian walked through the town of Rwanda when she stumbled upon a gorilla troop circling a huge hole in the ground. Suddenly, she recognized the troop’s leader; it was Pablo’s group, the one that she helped George track. *Why are they circling a large hole in the ground?*

Dian walked closer to the hole and saw a young gorilla that looked about three years old stuck at the bottom of the hole. It was Uwacu from Pablo’s group! She then realized that she needed to do something. Dian opened up her fuzzy leopard-print backpack and pulled out a sturdy rope. She tied one end around a nearby tree and the other end around her waist. Once finished, she jumped down the hole, the rope protecting her from injuring herself. Then, she picked up Uwacu with one arm and climbed up the side of the hole, with the rope keeping her from falling.

When she reached the top, Dian saw George standing there in disbelief. “Dian, what are you doing?” he asked.

“Saving Uwacu,” she replied as if it were nothing.

“Dian, from what I just saw, I am excited to tell you that you have become a senior tracker,” George announced, extremely proud of Dian. “Meet me at the amphitheatre at seven and bring your family.”

“Yes, sir,” Dian replied, using all of her might to stop her from screaming. As soon as George left, Dian jumped up and down and screamed, overjoyed by what had just happened.

Later that evening, Dian stood proudly on the stage as George announced that Dian had become a senior tracker.

*by Emma Fursevich* (11 years old)  
Langley, British Columbia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## The Warrior

“WATCH OUT, EMALIA!” Helena yelled at me.

I was riding my horse into the forest at a breakneck speed. A dummy marked with a red X came into sight. I shot three arrows at the dummy. My arrows hit the X. I launched myself at the target, spear clutched tightly in my left hand. It didn’t hit the dummy and, instead, sent me flying into a tree.

“Emalia?” Helena called.

I stood up and walked over to where she was waiting.

“I got the dummy with the arrows,” I muttered, “but the spear missed it.”

Helena was already a member of the war band. She was the second most senior person, after the war chief. She was also my older sister. Helena’s weapon was a spear, and so was mine. In our tribe, there were only five hundred of us. That made us vulnerable. Many other tribes took our resources. We went to war a lot.

“Tonight is The Choosing! What if I don’t get in?” I fussed.

“Relax,” Helena coaxed.

“Are you insane? I might lose my chance to be a warrior!” I spat.

“You’ll succeed. Have faith in yourself. Come with me,” Helena insisted.

I followed her to a huge bush. It was as big as our tent house. Carefully, Helena unravelled the branches, revealing an opening. I followed her into the bush, and I gasped in surprise. The inside was hollow, and there were swords, spears, whips, shields, and armour. There were also dummies and wooden posts.

“No way! What are these things for?” I nudged her in fascination.

She grinned. “Battle practice.”

Our wooden practice spears clashed. Helena was skilled, and she disarmed me. I got up and tried again. Over and over, Helena sent my spear flying into the air. I felt defeated. The sun was setting already, and it was almost time for The Choosing ceremony.

“Want me to accompany you there? You’ll need some extra luck,” Helena offered.

We walked over to The Field of Challenge, where the choosing of the war band would be. Around ten people were born every year. Only three made it into the war band.

“Welcome!” the war chief boomed. “To prove yourself, you have to battle your opponents! If you make it to the end, you will battle Helena or me to get into the war band!”

I had no problem battling the others, but when it came to the finals, I wasn’t so sure. I was paired with the war chief. He slammed his sword into me. I only managed to dodge his blade at the last second. I backed away, spun my spear around, and ran at him. He blocked it easily with his sword. After a few minutes of hopeless trying, he motioned me to stop. He walked towards Helena, and they whispered for a few minutes. They glanced at me then whispered some more. Finally, they seemed to come to an agreement.

“Kane and Sadie will join the ranks of the rookies, and the previous year’s rookies will move up a rank, and so on. Emalia—” he paused dramatically, “I have seen your archery skills. I believe you can do better with a bow and arrow. Can you shoot that target?” The war chief gestured ahead.

Way across the field, sitting on top of the archery house was a target. I took out my bow and arrow. I closed one eye, keeping my other on the bullseye. Carefully and precisely, I lined up the arrow’s point with the bullseye the best I could. I pulled the string back, and the arrow sailed through the air. There was a soft, quiet, faraway *thump* as stone met wood. The arrow hit the dead centre of the bullseye! The war chief exchanged looks with Helena. Helena gave an approving nod, and the war chief turned to me.

“Emalia, I believe that you will do amazingly as an archer. You can’t fight at the front lines, but you can combat from a distance. We have decided you will join the archery team. You will help train the rookies. Your archery skills are exceptional, and we haven’t seen that in the tribe for a long time,” the war chief announced.

I smiled in triumph. I couldn’t fight with a spear like Helena. I would still battle, though, from a distance. I had finally found my destiny, not as a combatant like the majority of the army but as a proud archer, ready to fight.

**by Hazel Chau** (10 years old)  
Calgary, Alberta

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Life as a Pair of Glasses

MY NAME IS CHLOE. I am a pair of glasses. Can you imagine how hard life is? Sometimes, I get dropped. I land on a hard, wooden floor. It hurts. I live mostly in a dirty, smelly, gross glasses' case. When my owner gets home from school, she leaves me in her dark and filthy backpack.

One day, my owner left me on her desk at school. When everyone was gone, all the school lights turned off. I was scared, alone, and had no clue how to find my way home.

I saw an unusual pencil next to me. The eraser at the end looked like a rainbow. The colours began to glitter, which gave me some light. I wiggled closer to the tip of the pencil. The lead was blue and pink. I stretched my arm to touch the pointy end of it. *Ouch!* It was very sharp.

A few moments later, I felt my body start to tingle and wiggle. To my surprise, my wish came true. I always wanted a pair of legs to get around and a voice. It happened!

I got up, took a few wobbly steps, and almost fell off the desk. I was determined to find my way home. I lifted myself up again and walked around the desktop. I was so excited; I danced as I had never danced before and shouted out, "Yeah, I can talk!" My adventure began.

I jumped off the desk to explore the school. I walked in the dark hallway and heard a screeching sound. A big, orange, three-eyed monster appeared from one of the classrooms. It startled me.

I started to run in the opposite direction. Then, the monster called my name: "Chloe, don't be afraid. My name is Bob, and I am friendly. I just need your help to find a lost gold necklace that my mom gave to me. My family and friends, who also live in this school at night, cannot find it either."

I agreed to look with Bob, the monster.

We searched through fifteen classrooms and could not find the necklace. Finally, we spotted it on the floor in the library. Bob was very happy.

"Can you please help me find my way home?" I asked.

Bob said, "Sure, I love helping people. Let's find your owner's address."

We searched in the office desk drawer and found a torn piece of a map—one quarter of my owner's address. Bob knew who could lead us to two more quarters of the map.

We walked to the science lab and asked Alexander, a sky-blue, one-eyed monster, for help. He entered a secret code to open a magical door that led underground. The two monsters and I slid down a slide and landed in a colourful ball pit. We climbed out of the pit and searched through fifty cardboard boxes and finally found the second and third quarters of my owner's address. We still had to find the last quarter of the street map.

Alexander led me and Bob through a door where we all sat down on a roller-coaster seat. The ride was fast and crazy, zooming through a tunnel that went up and down and zigzagged all around.

When the ride ended in a quick stop, we got out and walked into an elevator. We went up to the tenth floor as it was the only door that opened. We saw a lot of names and street maps posted across the walls.

I shouted, "There it is! I see my owner's name, Emma Henderson, and her address. How am I going to get there?"

Bob said he had the power to grant me one wish and one wish only.

I smiled and said, "I wish to fly home on a mystical unicorn."

Bob and Alexander waved goodbye. The unicorn flew me up in the sky and across the city. We suddenly landed in my house next to my owner's backpack. The unicorn disappeared. I slipped into the backpack and wiggled into my glasses' case.

The next morning, my owner, Emma, made sure I was safe in her backpack. She didn't even know she had forgotten me at school. My magical powers were gone. I couldn't walk or talk, but I was happy to be home.

*by Keira Forler* (9 years old)  
New Hamburg, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Solar Sickness

“Oh my God!” *Ahem! Ahem!* Mia coughs seriously after she opens the door that leads to her backyard. “Hmmm.” *Ahem! Ahem!* “Bad idea. Bad idea. I shouldn’t have come out of my house.”

Mia looks at the clock. She cannot tell if it is day or night. It is morning time, but the sky is completely dark. She hasn’t seen the Sun for such a long time, neither the Moon nor the stars. Mia got used not seeing them since she was a kid. Her mom told her that it wasn’t like that before on Earth.

The clock is ticking. *Tick-tock. Tick-tock. Tick-tock.* . . . The darkness of the sky and the *tick-tock* sounds make Mia feel lost and sad.

“WHAT CAN I DO?” Mia worries. “I don’t want the sky to be dark forever! Where is the Sun?”

Mia calms herself down and listens to her favourite classical piano song, “Für Elise” by Ludwig van Beethoven. The song is very soothing.

Suddenly, there is an ambulance siren, which rings through her ears. Mia stops the music and runs straight to the window. As soon as she opens the window, a force comes to her and sucks her up into a black hole.

“Ahhh! What is going on?” she screams and swirls into the black hole.

After a few minutes, Mia feels her body is getting lighter and lighter. She realizes that she is floating in the galaxy. She sees a floating building in the middle of the Milky Way. She tries to push herself towards the building’s direction.

As soon as she gets close to the building, she sees a sign that reads, “Milky Way Hospital.” There is an ambulance parked in front of the emergency entrance. Mia gets curious, so she goes inside the building.

Inside the building, Mia hears a lot of coughing and groaning in the hallway. There is no one at the reception desk, so Mia shrugs and goes straight to the waiting room. Mia is shocked that the patients are not human. They are little meteoroids.

“Oops, sorry!” Mia accidentally bumps into an alien nurse who is rushing to one of the surgery rooms in the intensive care unit.

“Does anyone have any idea of who is in the surgery room?” Mia asks a little meteoroid beside her, but the little meteoroid does not reply. There is a window in the waiting room where everyone can see through to the surgery room. Everyone gathers in front of the window. They start praying and seem very worried.

Mia sneaks inside the surgery room. The alien surgeons and nurses are chaotic, running around. “Can someone tell me what is happening here?” Mia asks, but no one replies again. Mia finally realizes that everyone in the hospital cannot see her or hear her. No wonder all the meteoroids do not know of her existence.

MIA APPROACHES closer to the operating bed. “Oh, my goodness! It is Mr. Sun on the bed,” Mia gasps.

Mr. Sun has an oxygen ventilator on. The echocardiogram machine shows that Mr. Sun’s heartbeat is extremely weak. On the monitor screen, it says thirty-five beats per minute. *Beeeeeep! Beeeeeep!* . . .

“For heaven’s sake, Mr. Sun is dying soon. Can someone save him, please?” Mia pleads.

Mia finds a medical report on the floor beside the hospital bed. Mia reads, “The patient is Mr. Sun. The sickness was caused by Earth’s pollution.” Mia concentrates on reading the report, but the chaos in the surgery room makes her feel dizzy. She starts having a serious migraine. She falls down unconscious on the floor, but she faintly hears someone trying to talk to her.

“MIA, WAKE UP! It’s already night-time. I came to check on you because I heard you talking. Why are you sleeping beside the piano? You should go back to your bed,” Mia’s mom remarks in a soft and sleepy voice.

“Mommy, I think I had a nightmare,” Mia replies.

“Oh, I’m so sorry to hear that. Sweetheart, are you all right? We can have popcorn while you talk about it,” Mia’s mom gives Mia a delightful hug.

“Okay, Mommy,” Mia cries, and she knows that the nightmare is a warning to humans.

**by Tiffany Luk** (8 years old)  
Vancouver, British Columbia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Mad Wizard

ONCE UPON A TIME, there was a girl named Roby. She was a bully; she even bullied her teachers. Everyone wondered why she was a bully except Cleo. Cleo was Roby's best friend. When Cleo was not looking or when she was away, Roby got mean and mad.

Roby used to be nice, but then a mad wizard put a spell on her that made her mean and mad. Cleo saw Roby being mean to a five-year-old kid at lunch. When school ended, Cleo asked Roby why she was mean at lunch. Roby just had to answer, so she answered. Roby said to Cleo, "A mad wizard put a spell on me. Now I am mean and mad."

Cleo had an idea. Cleo told Roby that they could make a witch's broom stick and go to the mad wizard and make him a good wizard. Roby said, "He is really mad. I don't think we can make him a good wizard with our words."

Cleo said, "We can make a wand that will make him good."

"That is a fine idea," said Roby.

"Let's start building," said Cleo.

Roby said, "Okay."

So, they gathered wood, plastic, and metal.

"The final ingredients," said Cleo.

"MAGIC!" said Cleo and Roby at the same time.

Soon, they flew away on their broom stick and went to Wizard's home. They knocked three times. The wizard opened the door.

"Who are you?" asked the wizard.

"I am Cleo, and she is Roby. We are here to make you good!" said Cleo.

"Ha! You can't do that!" said the wizard.

"Oh, yes! We can!" said Roby. She pulled the wand out of her pocket and said, "Presto! Let's go!"

Then, the wizard got his wand out and put a good spell on Roby. Soon, Roby and the wizard both became super nice. The wizard, Roby, and Cleo all became friends. They all lived happily ever after.

*by Mishel Kamran* (7 years old)  
Bowmanville, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **The Narwhal and the Three Stingrays**

ONCE UPON A TIME, there lived a happy, little narwhal named Narwhal. Narwhal had a long tail and a big horn. Narwhal lived in the ocean.

One day, Narwhal noticed three stingrays out the window of his house. They wanted to break into his house, capture him, and sting him. But Narwhal was a brilliant thinker. He really knew everything, even if he hadn't been told. He was also brilliant at kung fu. So, he planned to wait until nighttime.

During the day, he let the stingrays chase him until the night so they were sleepy. And so . . .  
*Zzzzzz, zzzzzz, zzzzzz!*

“Ouch! Ouchy!”

“AAAHHH! What happened?”

Narwhal was doing his kung fu on the stingrays. Then, he tried with his horn, but the stingrays were too quick. So, he used his kindness by using his magic to make them kind. The stingrays and the narwhal became friends. And they lived happily ever after!

*by Hudson Danh* (6 years old)  
Port Coquitlam, British Columbia