

# FIRST PRIZE

## **Police Mom**

Somewhere in the darkness,  
I'll hear a reassuring sound,  
The tearing of the Velcro,  
And her boots hitting the ground.

I'll hear the fridge door open  
As she picks a midnight treat,  
Then her sitting on the sofa  
To rest her weary feet.

In a while, I'll hear her softly  
Open up my door,  
And I'll pretend I'm sleeping  
As she peers at me once more.

Then she'll walk back to her bedroom  
And fall into her bed,  
And I'll say a little prayer  
That is swirling in my head.

*May God bless you, Mom, and keep you  
When you're out there on your own.  
May He guide you and protect you  
Until you're safely home.*

**by Sarah Hansen** (13 years)  
Penticton, British Columbia

# SECOND PRIZE

## It's Quiet Uptown

*can you hear that?*  
the shallow breathing of a country,  
a ghost town, a barren wasteland  
decimated due to the lack of life,  
people,  
noise,  
and civilization.

*can you see that?*  
masks, everywhere, and not those that hide true intentions;  
a barrier from the virus that has taken the world by storm,  
hiding not only half the face  
but a smile that could've brightened someone's day.  
and at times like these,  
happiness is sparse.

the new normal is supplying toilet paper  
and covering yourself neck deep in hand sanitizer.  
long live the days when "social distancing" was a foreign term,  
the days when our loved ones weren't half the world away,  
the days when people weren't divided by a glass window.

how the sounds of laughter have been long forgotten,  
replaced with the breaking bodies of the infected  
and a steady heartbeat on the monitor.  
beds filled not with sleeping people  
but with people fighting to see another day.

*can you hear that?*  
*the silence of the masked?*

*it's quiet uptown.*

**by Anais Edisane** (15 years)  
Toronto, Ontario

# THIRD PRIZE

## Staying at Home

I get in a small spot, a small hidden nook,  
And curl up with my favourite: an aged, loved, worn book.  
But something outside calls out to me, “Hey!”  
So, I put down my book and let my thoughts drift away.  
Outside, I can hear the birds in the trees  
And the soft, patient buzzing of a few bumble bees.  
It all seems so pretty, it all seems so gay,  
But a voice inside wonders, *When will I get away*  
*From this staying at home? from this small, empty cage?*  
I’ll just have to be strong. I’ll just have to be sage.  
*Soon, this will end*, a small, tiny voice cries,  
*And I’ll just let my patience grow three times its size.*  
I know this will end, but it’s hard to be clear,  
So I open the chirps of the birds to my ears  
And let out the patience that’s been inside me for years.

**by Emily Kornelson** (10 years)  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **My Grandma's Brain**

My grandma's brain is like a swimming pool:  
A lot of ideas floating around,  
None of them around for long;  
Some ideas take a lap while others drown.

Sometimes she will go to talk,  
Then the idea will swim away without her.  
My grandma's memory is a funny thing.

I can tell her about something and, each time,  
That memory of me telling her that  
Sinks to the bottom of the pool and drowns.

Sometimes she'll ask me the same question more than once;  
I don't mind though, because I love sharing with her.

She has memories that she will tell me from growing up.  
She will be like, "Have you heard this one?" I will say no.  
The swimming pool in her brain is getting bigger each day with all the  
Memories we have together.

The memories of shopping, the memories of cleaning.  
Memories of watching TV, the memories of when I was little.  
I don't know all the memories in my grandma's swimming pool,  
But I sure hope that the memories she never forgets are the memories  
That have to do with me and everything we have done.

Some of her memories are sad and depressing,  
Yet these seem to have sunken ever so slightly  
To make room for all the great adventures we have had.

I don't know all of what my grandma's swimming pool has in it.  
I do know, though, that inside that swimming pool  
Are amazing memories of people and places  
Before I was even a memory in her head.

**by Keltie McKenzie** (15 years)  
Sherwood Park, Alberta

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Gone**

I crack open your bedroom door  
Look around  
Perfection  
How can someone so organized  
Be gone?

Pictures hang on every wall  
Memories of a life once lived  
Beautiful  
How can someone so stunning  
Be gone?

Your bed made to perfection  
With lush pillows and soft blankets  
Some would even call you  
Lucky  
How can someone with so much  
Be gone?

A planner sits on the edge of your desk  
Day after day filled with meetings with friends  
Popular  
How can someone so friendly  
Be gone?

I'm still in denial  
You wouldn't do this to us  
Besides  
How can someone so loved  
Be gone?

I can feel your presence  
I know I can  
Comforting  
So tell me  
How can someone so present  
Be gone?

*by Sarah Offor* (15 years)  
Scarborough, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Marching**

Marching down the street  
Hands holding hands and signs  
Signs scrawled with our demands  
For love, peace, and justice  
Our words and goals different  
Like our faces and souls  
Yet that did not change  
Our unity

Marching down the street  
Our cries recorded, our pictures taken  
Labelled with captions and articles  
Either praising our bravery  
Or slandering our rebellion  
But it doesn't matter as long as  
It did not change what we felt then  
Our unity

Marching down the street  
With our pasts a reminder  
Of how we were separated  
Pitted against one another  
Made to fight for scraps of rights  
Hostile when we should  
Have been together in  
Our unity

Marching down the street  
And down the path of history  
Where we know we will be on  
The right side together  
The side that felt pain and love  
The side that sought change  
Change brought through  
Our unity

*by Grace Liang* (14 years)  
Toronto, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Feeling Alone**

Sometimes I sit in my sorrow,  
I feel so alone.  
People try to help,  
But I just go through my phone.  
I feel not enough,  
With everything I do,  
And I hope no one else has to feel this way too.  
It feels as if I'm drowning,  
Gasping for air.  
Family and friends care,  
But I feel as if no one's there.  
People ask, "Are you okay?"  
I lie and say I'm fine,  
But at night I lie on my bed,  
Lights off, music on,  
And the sobbing begins when I hear a sad song.  
Some people use self-harm to cope,  
But I pray that they will find the light and have hope.  
It's nobody's fault that I am sad,  
So nobody should feel bad.  
No matter how big I smile or how loud I laugh,  
I always feel alone.

*by Sophia Newman* (13 years)  
Grande Prairie, Alberta

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **The Mower**

I often cut grass with a mower,  
For the grass is a very good grower.  
It's tough as a weed  
And grows at such speed,  
I wish it would grow a bit slower.

*by Rory Macpherson* (12 years)  
Lake Country, British Columbia



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Perseverance

There is no summer camp  
For the first time I can remember  
No one playing basketball  
Under the dimly lit lamp  
Perhaps until September

Everyone is wearing a mask  
Avoiding others and changing ways  
An eerie silence fills the block  
This is when we ask  
“How boring are our days?”

When our produce comes  
We disinfect it all  
Unable to eat outside  
As people there succumb  
When they don't follow health protocols

Remote learning has presented itself  
Staring at a screen for many hours  
No play dates to break our boredom  
No new books on the bookshelf  
As we water our beds of flowers

As the confirmed cases climb  
Staying home, we recommend  
People are scared, left and right  
But if we persevere through these times  
COVID-19 will come to an end

*by Ray Zhang* (11 years)  
Vancouver, British Columbia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Lost in the Rainforest

It is green and moist and alive everywhere.  
There are annoying flies buzzing in my hair.  
In the rushing river, there's a crocodile.  
He is staring at me with his toothy smile.  
I have been in the humid rainforest for far too long,  
And all I have to comfort me is the birds' cheery song.  
A toucan flies through the clear blue sky.  
I watch a red-eyed tree frog hop by.  
Monkeys swing in the leafy canopy,  
A sloth dangles from a branch lazily.  
There are ferns, shrubs, and other plants all around.  
I trip on a root, and I fall to the ground!  
In the bushes behind me, I hear a strange sound.  
An anteater pops out just as I turn around.

But when the bright sun goes down, I shiver with fright.  
I think about what might be hiding in the night.  
Is there a spotted jaguar hiding in the dark?  
Or a poisonous snake ready to make its mark?  
At last, I finally go to sleep.  
The dark jungle does not make a peep.  
I wake to the sound of a howler monkey's call;  
Its black throat has inflated to a big, round ball.  
I see something red in the sky; I am amazed.  
It is a helicopter; hooray, I am saved!  
A rope drops down, and I climb up into the big chopper.  
The police officer piloting it must be a good spotter.  
I listen to the bird and monkey chorus,  
As I take my last look at the rainforest.

*by Ronan Spangaro* (10 years)  
Oakville, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Paddling**

I dip my paddle into the water  
As I scan the horizon.  
A view of the lake unfolds like a panorama.  
My strokes create a rhythm,  
A pattern that puts me at peace.  
Slowly, I turn around,  
And I land at the dock,  
Ending my adventure.

*by Azlyn Stanley* (9 years)  
Cambridge, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Corona Summer

Double rainbows in the sky.  
I imagine sliding down the colourful ribbon with my little sister. Oh, what fun!  
    Playing superhero—  
    Maybe we can save the world, one step at a time.  
    My first penpal: Hajimemashite!  
    (We are oceans away, but we are all the same.)  
Saying goodbye to Fishie, aka Mr. Moustache, who lived in our pond (for like *foreverrr*).  
    Singing “Happy Birthday” twice,  
    Every time to keep us safe.  
    Life is a marble run—  
Sometimes fast, sometimes slow, sometimes with unexpected turns.  
    Picnics and al fresco dining . . . in our backyard.  
    Postponed weddings, or no weddings at all.  
    I *sooo* wanted to be a flower girl.  
    Quarantine haircuts: OMG, Daddy, your hair is so bushy!  
    A quiet day at the park—  
    Sipping bubble tea on a hot day with my mommy.  
A hungry little caterpillar joined me for lunch. One day, it will turn into a beautiful butterfly.  
    One day, I will say, “Oh, what a corona summer it was!”

*by Autumn Woo* (8 years)  
Richmond, British Columbia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Animals Move!**

Lizards crawl  
Crocodiles crawl  
They do not hop  
They crawl, crawl, crawl

Bunnies hop  
Kangaroos hop  
They do not walk  
They hop, hop, hop

Wolves walk  
Wolverines walk  
They do not fly  
They walk, walk, walk

Bats fly  
Birds fly  
They do not swim  
They fly, fly, fly

Fish swim  
Sharks swim  
They do not climb  
They swim, swim, swim

All animals move  
They do not stay still  
They just move, move, move!

**by Kason Anari** (4 years)  
Toronto, Ontario

# FIRST PRIZE

## The Lost Loon

*I reach out, immediately grateful when I feel Mom's paper-thin hands grasping my own. Comfort gently falls over me, like the ancient thick quilt she sewed me when I was born. I'm floating in a warm feeling, but in the back of my mind, I know it is too good to be true. Suddenly, as if my thoughts sparked Mom's actions, she tries to pull away. The soft floor is disappearing and turning into a thick swamp. I fall under the current and get swept away. I throw a final desperate glance to see Mom again, but instead, I see the slick back of a loon, swimming away towards the moon. Is it a sign?*

I wake up in a panic, screaming for Mom for the hundredth time since she passed away three months ago. I reach to my left to turn on my lamp, before remembering I am not at home. My skin feels moist in my sleeping bag, and I can only imagine how chaotic my chestnut hair looks under my toque. The familiar smell of a stuffy tent reaches my nose and throws me into a deep memory from years ago.

*I step out of my tent and find Mom sitting at the picnic table. She hands me a mug of steamy hot chocolate and ruffles my hair. I look up at her and laugh; she is wearing her toque with a knitted cartoon loon on it, her spirit animal!*

I'm brought back to the present by the pinch of yet another bug bite. I reach up to adjust my toque, instantly softening when I feel the knitted cartoon loon from my memory. I step out of the tent and take in the view of the Rockies. I can't help but wonder what my father's doing. He's probably making breakfast for his new family, something he never did for Mom and me.

When I decided to defer my acceptance from my home city university, no one was around to stop me. I finished my final year of high school and packed up for six months in the mountains. I wanted to feel close to Mom again.

I fall into the familiar routine of packing up my tent and belongings after a breakfast of a granola bar and dried fruit. I hoist my 100L backpack onto my tense back and set off on Toby Creek, my current trail.

My footsteps create a steady pulse, pounding like the base beat of a snare drum. My thoughts wander back to Mom, and I fall into a trance.

*I pad down the stairs in my cupcake slippers with an animated smile on my face. "Happy seventh birthday!" Mom cheers. I skip the last two steps and run into Mom's open arms. "Guess what, Bella," Mom teases, "it's a sunny day with clear skies! And you know what that means?" she continues. "It's a sign!"*

A smile unconsciously appears on my dirty face. I angle it up to face the sun, which falls like a warm blanket over me. I always loved how my mom believed in signs.

I bring my attention back to the trail and try to distract myself from the heavy bag pulling my shoulders to the ground.

After two more hours of walking, I stop by a lake to sit and eat a fruit bar. I'm about to start peeling off the wrapper when a high-pitched animal noise pulls my eyes and ears alert.

I look up and drop my bar in shock. Swimming towards the bank of the river is a clean white loon. Seeing the loon feels the same as seeing my mother in front of me. I reach out to it with a shaky hand, and it doesn't backtrack as I expect it to. My mom was always the one who would call something a "sign," but for once, I believe this loon is connected to her in some way.

I gather my thoughts and begin to speak in a hushed tone. I tell the loon everything I wanted to say to my mom before she passed away. When I run out of things to say, we sit in silence for a few more minutes. Eventually, I hoist the backpack onto my back. It feels as if a weight has been lifted off my shoulders, even though my backpack is just as heavy as before.

I stand up with one final look at the loon. I'm ready to keep going. I'm ready to move on.

*by Alia Nanji* (15 years)  
Calgary, Alberta

# SECOND PRIZE

## Open Road

Silence filled the small room as a group of more than forty people huddled together barely breathing for fear of attracting the attention of the Quadrasors.

It was common knowledge that a few months ago an unidentified spacecraft had entered the atmosphere. They dropped shuttles in major cities around the globe; within hours of their landing, the cities were ablaze with thousands missing or dead. Today, they had dropped a shuttle outside the school; it had been a rush of who could get to a lockable room first.

I sat frozen in fear as the sounds of the unlucky running down the halls were heard.

“They’re coming!” someone outside shrieked. I pulled my knees closer as I heard murmurs from behind me.

“How can we just sit here as people die?” a voice announced from the back of the room.

*Don’t be a hero*, I wanted to say, but my jaw was shut firmly.

“This is our school! If Quadrasors thinks they can come here and no one will fight back, then they have another thing coming!” There were voices of encouragement from around the small space.

“I’m going out there, who’s with me?”

*I’m not*, I thought darkly.

It started as one person joining in, and before I knew it, almost everyone was in agreement. They broke the lock on the door and stormed out.

*Fantastic!* With the lock broken, there was no point sitting here waiting to be found.

I joined the stream of people filing out of the room and towards the exit. The pavement had been ripped up, and the shuttle had been dropped in the middle of the field. As people ran forward at the wave of humanoid creatures, I joined the few sensible people running the other way. I scurried over the fence encircling the field and took off into the forest. There was a ski hill next to the school that had probably been evacuated. I could grab some supplies and get as far away as possible before the Quadrasors got tired of the school.

I could see the top of a chairlift in the clearing ahead; I was panting as I sprinted towards it. I pushed the green button on the control panel and grabbed onto the first seat before it could leave. I slumped down, listening to my uneven breath.

“I see we had similar ideas,” a voice from behind me called. Spinning around, I saw a boy on the chair behind me. He had brown hair that was blowing wildly in the breeze; beside him was a backpack and a baseball bat. He must have seen my gaze land on the bat because he called up to me. “They were in the control centre at the top.” He gestured to the little shack at the top of the hill.

There was an inhuman scream from the top of the hill, and a Quadrasor could be seen entering the clearing; its pale skin pulled taut over its thin form. It must have seen us because it began to run down the hill, using its four arms to propel it faster.

There were only two chairs between me and the bottom. *One more*. Almost there, the creature was halfway down the slope and closing. My thoughts turned to the boy behind me: *I would make it to the bottom, but at the speed that thing is coming, he might not*.

I hit the ground running as my chair reached the unloading platform. I had only taken a few steps before I heard a scream from behind me. The thing had tackled the boy. I looked back to see him on his back, barely holding the thing off. I ran back towards them, grabbing the boy’s fallen bat and swinging it with all of my might. I hit the creature square in the jaw, and it fell limply to the side.

“Thanks, I thought you might not come back,” the boy was panting as he lay sprawled on the ground.

“Well, come on, let’s get a move on,” I sighed, extending my hand to help him up.

Once he was up, we made our way to the chalet to grab supplies before finding a car someone had left behind; lucky for us, the keys were still in the ignition. Our best option was to put as much distance between us and them and wait for the military to come help. Until then, it would just be us and the open road.

**by Madelyn McNulty** (14 years)  
Coldwater, Ontario

# THIRD PRIZE

## The Last Tropical Flamboyant Newt

Rocks.

Sharp, jutted spears choking life. Lifeless, colourless teeth in the jaws of endless suffering. I stared out at the flat, vast world littered with rocks from horizon to horizon. Rocks everywhere, covering the ground with their bleak greyness. That greyness was reflected in the sky above it. There was no sun, no blue sky, not even clouds—just solid grey.

But these rocks were more than all that—they were a punishment.

When I was a young and unaware human, I did not yet know of the humans' grave crimes.

*"Why are the rocks here, Pa?" I asked my father as we sat in the darkness of our cave one night.*

*"Shhh, keep your voice down," he grumbled gruffly. "You'll wake the other tribe members sleeping in their caves."*

*"But why are the—"*

*"All right, I suppose you're old enough to hear the story of how these rocks came to be, so listen closely. When I was a young boy, the world was not like this. It was bursting with life, with light, with colour."*

*"What's colour, Pa?"*

*"Something you will never know, Daughter. Back then, what we humans loved, above all else, was killing tropical flamboyant newts. We killed them to carve their bones, to craft with their skin. Eventually, there wasn't a single newt left."*

*I gasped.*

*"Yes, it was a severe crime, killing such a cherished creature. The slime-backed turtles alerted The Above, and It was furious with us humans, so It brought these rocks down upon us from the sky. The Above punished us, and rightfully so. Every human was, and still is, terribly ashamed of what we've done."*

Suddenly, all these years later, I was reminded of my father's words as I hunted along the banks of Scumwater Pond for stone worms to bring back to the tribe for dinner. This pond was our only water source, even if the water were as filthy as mud. I rolled a stone over along the edge of the water as I heard a slurping noise from the pond. I turned to see the head of a slime-backed turtle emerge from the murky water. I was once again reminded of the story Pa told me all those years ago.

What happened next passed in a flash of movement: one moment I was crouched on the shore, and the next I was being dragged into the filthy water by the massive turtle's flippers. I was instantly petrified; I couldn't breathe. My fear was amplified because this was not familiar to me. I screamed all of my air out, thrashing under the turtle's unbreakable grip. He dragged me deeper and deeper into the water, and there was soon a fire raging in my lungs. My throat clenched up.

*Air! my body screamed. Air!*

Suddenly, I could breathe. The turtle released me, and I could again register my surroundings. I was in a cavern lit by an eerie glow. Water pooled on the ground, but there was a small shore. I crawled onto it, gasping for breath, and only then did I see the creature beside me.

It was the last tropical flamboyant newt.

Never had I seen such beauty. The colours of its skin shone. The tribe chief had told me about colours more than my father had. She told me that blue was fresh and clear and meant flowing water, pink was soft and warm and meant fragrant flowers, orange was bright and exciting and meant sweet fruit. All that and more was swirling through the newt in front of me. The creature turned to me expectantly. I knew what to do.

"I'm so sorry," I whispered with enough contriteness to represent every human alive.

The turtle swam the newt and I up to the surface, and what I saw awed me. Lush green trees sprouted from the rich soil. Creatures of all kinds swung about the trees. Rivers flowed. Flowers blossomed. Fruit hung from branches. The buttery yellow sun warmed my shoulders. I raced back to my tribe's caves, which now sat in a cluster on either side of a gushing waterfall, only to find everyone gazing around at the sudden beauty. Everyone gasped at the sight of the newt in my hands, and Pa rushed up to me.

"You've saved us!" he cried. "The Above has forgiven us!"

Sometimes all it takes to make things right can be a simple yet pure act, and it can save worlds.

**by Megan Kilby** (13 years)  
Godfrey, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Grandparents for a Day

It was lunchtime, and everyone was eating happily with their grandparents while my table remained empty. I hate Grandparents' Day.

"That poor boy has no one," a grandma whispered.

"I'm so glad I have grandparents," a boy murmured. I was sick of all the pitying; it was so degrading.

I walked up to the teacher. "Ms. Craig, may I use the bathroom?"

"Sure, Vincent." She smiled. But in her eyes, I could tell she was thinking, *This poor boy must be going to cry and eat alone*. She wasn't exactly wrong, I was on the verge of tears, but her pity made me feel angry. I grabbed my lunchbox and headed to an empty stairwell. Today's lunch was another pack of tuna and crackers. My parents are too busy to make proper meals.

"How pitiful." I turned around. A glowing girl was wearing a flowing white dress. I stared deep into her eyes. "Today is weird." I turned back towards my lunch. "At least ask who or what I am!" She floated in front of me, exasperated. "I am a spirit dealer, and I want your lunch!"

"My tuna and crackers? Why?"

"I'm bored." She took my lunchbox and made the crackers dance around. "In exchange, I'll give you your grandparents back for a day!"

"That seems like a very unbalanced deal. How are you allowed to do that?" I watched her slip a cracker into her mouth as her face lit up.

"I'm a freelancer," she mumbled. "Since I've already finished half of your lunch, here's your part of the deal." She waved her finger, and a puddle of gold formed on the ground. It began to bubble and formed into the shape of four people.

"Vincent, you've grown so big!" an old woman's voice called out. I found myself wrapped in the arms of four fuzzy sweaters as the smell of cookies and campfire put me at ease.

"I changed your diapers!" yelled a dry crackly voice.

"Grandpa, we can hear you just fine, no need to yell."

I guess I was supposed to be surprised that my grandparents were back alive, but I just met a freelance spirit dealer who took my lunch, so I was quite calm.

"Sweetie, let's go back to class." My grandma took my hand and led me out of the stairwell.

*Hey, Ms. Craig, funny news, all four of my grandparents just reincarnated ha-ha*, I thought. *Maybe I could lie and say that these people are my grandpa's siblings?*

To my surprise, Ms. Craig was completely unfazed. "Welcome back, Vincent! What took you so long? You're supposed to give your grandparents a tour of the school after lunch, remember?" Ms. Craig smiled sweetly.

*Oh*. I heard a giggle and the crunch of a cracker nearby.

The rest of Grandparents' Day was great. Nana left during the tour and came back with a homemade boxed lunch. The food melted on my tongue and filled my body with warmth. It was amazing.

My table was silent before, but now we were the noisiest in the class. Grandpa told a lot of funny jokes and embarrassing stories about my dad. Papa was extraordinary at origami and amazed the teacher during art. Grandma had the warmest hugs, and Nana had the silliest laugh. I even got to listen to them criticize my parents. I'd never had so much fun in my life.

What I thought would be the longest day of my life ended in a flash. We stood solemnly in the stairwell.

"Grandma loves you so much." Grandma kissed my hair as I buried my face in her sweater.

"When you come and visit, I'll make your favourite food again." Nana ruffled my hair. Grandpa and Papa lifted me on their shoulders and paraded around the room laughing. It wasn't long before everyone was in tears.

"If you all leave again, I'll be alone," I sobbed.

Grandma cupped my face in her hands. "When you succeed, we will celebrate with you. When you fail, we will send hugs and kisses. You'll never be alone, Vincent."

The spirit dealer appeared on the stairs. "I'll offer you all the tuna and crackers I have. Please let me have them with me for longer!" But the spirit dealer just shook her head. She swirled her finger, and the golden puddle formed again.

"Goodbye, Vincent."

They melted into the golden goop. The stairwell fell quiet, yet I could still feel their warmth and hear their laughs.

**by Angela Luo** (15 years)  
Richmond Hill, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Okay, Genius

The corners of Easton's mouth turned up, revealing his naturally crooked grin. The type of grin that would make anyone assume he was one of the "trouble kids," and immediately have teachers become extra wary around him.

"Here goes nothing," he said, pulling a small beaker from the pocket of his lab coat and placing it on the metal table in front of us.

I stood beside him, watching in awe as he added a few ingredients that I'd never heard of before. A blue frothy liquid started to bubble inside the beaker, like a root beer float with food colouring. The beaker shook on the table, and the solution rose to the top of the glass, spilling over the edges and inching its way down the table legs towards the concrete floor.

Easton's eyes darted back and forth, and occasionally, he would glance behind himself nervously, as if someone were watching us. It's a good thing no one was, because we would've looked completely insane.

With his messy blond hair sticking up around his face, and the science experiment we were conducting, he looked like a young Albert Einstein. The stolen glimpses of myself in the garage-door reflection proved to me that I wasn't any better. Grease smudges marked my face in the same dark ebony colour as my hair, and the spread of freckles across my nose just looked like dirt splotches. We were a total mess, but we didn't care.

I backed up a few steps, so the blue liquid wouldn't accidentally touch my foot, and stared slack-jawed as the solution reached the floor. The first drop sizzled when it hit the concrete, like bacon in a frying pan. *Root beer floats and bacon? Man, I must be hungry.* The drop spluttered for a few seconds then burned right through the floor. A small black hole was left in its wake, with no discernible bottom. The edges of the hole were left blue-tinted, so it, unfortunately, couldn't be passed off as a scorch mark.

Easton whooped loudly, pumping his fist in the air. "This is it, Dax," he said to me. "We've got it right this time, I can feel it!" He gripped my shoulder excitedly and pointed at the ceiling. "Look." A hole formed right above us, identical to the one the solution burned on the ground. Easton sighed happily, his crisp blue eyes fixed on mine. "Remember this moment, Dax. We're going to be legends!"

I fished around in my pockets for a second and eventually located the penny. We had decided to use a penny a while ago; it was the perfect tool. Small and simple, so chances are it would go unnoticed. I took a deep breath, "Let's hope this works. . . ." I released my grip, and the coin free-fell through the hole. It seemed to be plummeting for ages, because there was no audible landing sound.

"Okay, ten, nine, eight . . .," Easton started to count. He held his hand out under the ceiling hole and checked his watch to make sure his timing was correct. ". . . three, two, one."

As if on cue, the penny dropped from the hole above and landed gracefully in the palm of his hand. He relaxed his shoulders, and his grin spread even wider, which I didn't think was possible.

I leaned over and admired the coin. "Not a single scratch," I murmured. "No dirt or anything. It's just how we left it."

Easton's eyes sparkled with pride. "Told you we could do it. Now, was that so hard?"

I rolled my eyes. "Only took you, what, three years?"

"And two months," he added. "Still faster than I would've thought. Bet you it would've taken other scientists, like, a decade," he smirked.

"Okay, genius," I said with a wry smile, "you're the boss." He gave me a passionate fist bump, and I asked, "So . . . life goal complete?"

"Are you kidding?" he chuckled. "Not even close, man. One day, I'm going to go down there too. Not just pennies and, you know, other assorted coins. Humans too." His face glowed warmly with the thought. "And I'm going to be the first."

That was two years ago, the day Easton invented interdimensional travel. Yesterday, he finally found a way for humans to go too—I told you he was a genius. The issue is, he kept his word. He was the first human to enter the abyss. And he still hasn't come back.

**by Abigail Todd** (14 years)  
Orangeville, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Behind the Poker Face

In all of her twelve years, Mikayla “Mika” Dallas had never felt as if she truly belonged. Not in the orphanage, not alone, and certainly not now, in a foster home with three boys: teenage Chase and the younger twins, Cameron and André.

Chase had never been very sociable. He often found himself in the shade of a tree alone, absorbed in a novel while his younger brothers frolicked about in the fields beyond. Shy by nature, he didn’t speak often, giving Mikayla the impression he’s a snob.

Her whole life, Mika had dreamt of being part of a loving family. Despite what she’d been told at the orphanage, she believed that everyone—even she—had the capacity to love and be loved, if only given the chance.

Months passed, and to her dismay, things hadn’t taken a turn for the better. She made her way down the stairs one afternoon, appalled by the unusual silence in the house. Bemused, she peeked into the nearest room. Her foster family was hunched together over the pages of a family photo album. Even metres away, Mikayla could sense magic in the air—a powerful familial bond radiating across the room, an aura of connection, love, and trust. Her foster mother leaned over, planting kisses on the twins’ foreheads and encircling her arms around her husband and Chase affectionately. Having seen enough, Mikayla recoiled, breathing heavily. Her foster mother’s expression flashed through Mika’s closed eyelids. The way she’d looked at her family—the pure, unconditional love shimmering in her eyes, the heartwarming glow of pride in her smile, and the joy that rippled across her cheeks—a look that had never crossed the faces of anyone who’d looked at her.

Behind the poker face of every being—each unspoken feeling—thruived an untold story. Hers, the story of the journey of a girl who sought belonging and acceptance.

Heartbroken, a single tear traced its way down her cheek, unearthing emotions she’d tried to banish years ago. Sitting in the darkness of her own shadow, she’d never felt so alone.

*I could never fit in with this perfect family,* she thought to herself. *I’ll always be the girl who doesn’t belong.* Overwhelmed by anguish, she rose, wiping away her tear, and crept out the back door. Lip trembling, she bolted through the country fields behind the house, her eyes set on the dark, forbidding forest a mile away, never once looking back.

Spotting the door ajar and approaching it through the crack, a flash of movement caught Chase’s eye from deep within the fields of green and yellow: Mika’s unmistakable auburn braid. A damp, humid scent made its presence, and Chase instantly recognized the distinguishing smell of an incoming storm. Overcome by a sudden desperation, he ran out after Mikayla without a second thought.

When Chase caught up to her, the poker face Mika had been wearing for years, her “protective shield,” began crumbling, despite her prolonged efforts to conceal her feelings.

“Mikayla—” Chase panted, oblivious to her distress, “we have to leave now. A storm is coming.”

Mika collapsed onto the mossy ground, tears spilling from her eyes.

“You don’t understand, Chase. I don’t belong in this family. I never have,” she sobbed, turning away from him. “I feel . . . lost.”

In that second, she realized the shield she’d set up against the world had also been to help her deny her own feelings, because burying feelings had been easier than admitting them. Taking a leap of faith, she let down her “shield,” confiding in Chase her story—her life, past, pain, dreams, and soul. In her moment of vulnerability, Chase listened silently, face expressionless.

“Listen,” he said at last. “This is where you belong. We are a family now and will never again be without you. You aren’t alone anymore. You’re one of us.”

Mikayla gave a subtle smile. “How do we get home?”

*Us. Home.* The words echoed through her mind.

“I don’t know,” Chase fretted.

“So, we are . . . lost?”

Storm clouds engulfed the sky, blocking the sun. Droplets of rain began to fall around them, the rumble of thunder in the distance becoming more prominent. Chase knelt beside his foster sister, wrapping his arms around her comfortingly.

“Don’t worry, Mika,” Chase whispered. “Being lost means we can find our way again. *Together.*”

Chase stared up at the clouds looming overhead, feeling his sister’s head buried in his shoulder. He pulled her in tighter, determined never to let go.

**by Jessica Eng** (13 years)  
Toronto, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Returning the Cure

*I have to return this. They won't catch me,* I assure myself as I fly through the cold night air of Aipotu, clutching the tiny vial of clear liquid tighter in my hand. The peaceful neighbourhood below morphs into a mountain range up ahead, and I speed up towards my friend Iris's cottage, which stands on a cliff.

An image of my neighbours, Mrs. Murphy and her two kids, Dan and Lydia, pops into my head when I glance at the vial, almost hearing the children calling me: "Cayden! Cayden!" Their mother is one of the millions of people in our world infected with the "mortal flu," a virus that seems harmless at first but is actually extremely deadly and contagious. I can't stop thinking about my visit to the family yesterday, and Mrs. Murphy's coughing echoes in my mind. Anyone with this disease must be healed quickly. That's why I'm holding the virus's cure, which my gang, Flash Force, stole from the scientists who created it. Iris, who is one of those scientists, can make copies of it with the high-tech equipment hidden in her cottage. I just have to get there.

I hear my name being called again, but this time, it doesn't sound like the kids at all. Looking back, I see Flash Force emerging from behind a group of oak trees separating the houses from the mountains, with Blaise, my boss, flying at the front. "Cayden! Stop right there!" he yells.

Heart hammering, I try to fly faster towards the jagged teeth of the cliff edge, which is close now. "No! I won't let you get rid of this!" I call, pressing the vaccine to my chest.

"I won't if the scientists give me the money I asked for. But you can't take it," he says.

I grit my teeth. "You didn't listen to me! I told you that you can't haggle over something as valuable as the cure."

"Why not?" he says as I turn around just in time to avoid crashing into the mountain. The rest of the team follows me up to the soft grass and surrounds me. Blaise lands right in front of the door, blocking my way.

I look around at the other members, who look uneasy, and I take a deep breath to calm down. "I understand that money is important to you, but the vaccine is for the public, not for personal gain. Yesterday, I found out that Mrs. Murphy is infected. When I saw her in the hospital, breathing rapidly and coughing, with skin so pale it was almost white, Dan and Lydia wouldn't leave her side. They looked so desperate, and they were never like that before. And . . ." I gulp, "millions of people are dying right now. We never harm anyone, but this is tantamount to murder! We have to give the vaccine back."

Blaise bites his lip. "If the scientists care that much, they'll hurry up to give me my money. Then I'll give the vaccine back. And we all agreed to split the money, so you guys will get rewarded too!"

"No," I say, shaking my head. "I never wanted to get money in this way. I'd rather help save someone from the mortal flu, because knowing that I've done the right thing is rewarding enough. Imagine if someone you loved caught the virus. What would you do then? Still wait for money?"

He doesn't speak, so I head to Iris's door, but Joe, our mission coordinator, grabs my arm. I freeze. The others are moving closer to me, maybe to forcefully take the cure, but I don't expect what Joe says next at all: "Me too." My eyebrows shoot up in surprise.

A girl speaks up, "Blaise, if you want money, there are other ways to get it. Cayden is right. The vaccine can save everyone."

"Yeah, we never murder, nor do we steal such valuable items."

Everyone except Blaise has moved to my side now. "I thought you all agreed with me," Blaise says, a bewildered expression on his face.

Joe shakes his head. "We were just scared of you."

Blaise nods slowly. "Well, I'm asking the health department for a reward for doing this." Everyone laughs at that. "But," he continues. "I think . . . you've all made a good point."

I smile, handing him the vial. Then, he turns around, hesitating for a second before knocking on the door. When Iris appears, he holds the cure out. . . .

**by Sophie Ding** (12 years)  
Markham, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## A Complicated Flower

I shakily put a foot on the soccer field. My legs wobble. *They're everywhere. I can't do this.*

"Olivia! What's taking you so long! This game was your idea!" My friend Lisa runs over. Easy for her to say. She doesn't care that the whole field is covered in dandelions. She isn't terrified of yellow flowers. In fact, I think she likes them.

"I, um, don't really want to play soccer anymore."

"But it's your favourite sport! And it's a perfect day for it too!"

"I'm kind of . . . cold. I'm going to go get a sweater." I spin around and run. I need to get home. I cross the road and spring back as I see the sidewalk. How can those stupid things grow between sidewalk cracks?

My name is Olivia, and I have what I think is the most irrational fear in the whole world: dandelions. Even the name for it sounds dumb: *jimdandyphobia*. I looked it up.

I peer down at the dandelion. I take a deep breath, close my eyes, and jump over it. I race to my house as fast as I can and find my older sister, Tara, standing at the door.

"I thought you'd be home early," she says. Tara knows about my fear. "You were at the soccer field. I'm surprised you're not bawling right now."

"Ugh, be quiet, Tara," I reply.

"Seriously, you know it's ridiculous. They're weeds, not monsters. You have to get over it," she says.

I push past her into the house. I hear her calling after me, trying to apologize. I slam the door to my room. *Tara could at least try to be nice.*

I open the computer on my desk. I've searched how to overcome the fear of dandelions thousands of times, but the internet is never helpful. This time isn't any different. I close it in frustration. Stupid weeds.

I hear the phone ring. It's Lisa. I tell her that I'm feeling sick. It's an awful excuse, but it gets me out of going back to the park.

"You're a terrible liar." Tara walks into my bedroom and slams a book on my nightstand.

"What's that?" I ask, motioning towards the book.

"Look at it. I think it might help."

I pick it up and read the title: *Dandelions: Everything There is to Know*.

"Is this a joke?" I ask.

"No, it's a gift. Read it, and you can thank me later." She walks out and shuts the door gently behind her.

I shove the book under my bed. I get up and open the computer again, then stop myself. I rummage under my bed and pull the book back out. I brush some dust off the cover. *Where did Tara find this thing?* It looks old, but as though it's never been opened. Inside, the pages are covered in pictures, drawings, and diagrams of . . . dandelions. I read a bit of the first chapter, "Identifying Dandelions." I skip that part. The next chapter is about their life cycle. I skip that as well. I'm about to give up when chapter three catches my eye: "The Structure: Inside a Dandelion." I've always been into science, and this is something I don't already know about the dreaded plant. *Why not give it a read?*

I read the book—not just chapter three but four and five—until Mom calls me for dinner. I read the book every day, every chance I get. It's fascinating. And now, I know what I have to do.

I shudder as I walk onto the soccer field, book in hand. I don't need it for what I'm about to do, but it helps to have it there, to remind me that a dandelion is a flower—a complicated, interesting flower. A flower that I am going to pick. A fear that I am going to face.

I arrive at the field. The dandelions look even taller now, more menacing. My eyes land on a huge, puffy one with a thick stem. Half the seeds are blown off, and the leaves are slightly brown. My heart starts to pound, and my palms get sweaty. I remember the book. *It's just a flower. It's just a flower. It's just a flower.* I reach over and grab it. I blow away the rest of the seeds as I've seen other kids doing and watch them fly away in the wind.

I drop the dandelion, scramble back, and smile.

*I did it.*

**by Willa Holmes** (11 years)  
Edmonton, Alberta

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## The Whispering Forest

Their song catches the breeze. Leaves rustle. Wind passes through them, creating a song. Fate's song. My bare feet are tired of wandering. Tired of not knowing where they belong. I'm tired of not knowing. I'll know if I take another step. My eyes long to see it. My white-blond hair sways in harmony with the wind.

Far and wide, people talk of this place. Its leaves. Its roots. Its stream with lily pads strewn across it. This forest is alive. Finally. It's calling me. I know it. I feel it in my bones, my head. *This is where I'm meant to be. This is where I find out.*

The whispers are louder now. Different voices overlap others. Voices I don't know. Voices I know. Words I long to hear. I have arrived. "Come to us, child. Embrace us," they breathe. "You need us. Come. You cannot wait."

Gently, a lily pad the width of a tree trunk floats to a stop at my feet. Surprised by this, I tentatively lower myself down, so softly I sit on the pad. It is smooth on top and feels glazed.

Then it flows down the stream.

A canopy of trees is over my head. Trees all shapes and sizes pass by. I see some birch trees, some cedar trees, as well as pine trees. White flowers litter the ground.

I glance at the water. My eyes widen, my pupils dilate.

The water looks like glass. So clear and crystal-like. It sparkles. It is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. Minnows swim at the bottom. Various river plants also live there. *Everything's so . . . perfect.*

Whispers of the trees pass through me intoxicatingly. The wind is hypnotizing as it brushes through the leaves. A soft tinkle sounds like a faery laughing.

As I gaze at the water, my reflection stares back. My hands reach out to fix a loose strand of hair in the water. As my fingers make contact with the water, the veins on them start glowing. I gasp in astonishment and instinctively reel my hands back, but it's too late. The bright-white glowing climbs up all of my veins. Then it dawns on me. *The water is coursing through me.* As it reaches my temple, an unbearable, hot white flash happens.

Then, darkness.

I feel my eyes opening. Everything's rimmed in blurriness, and everything's hazy. I am not quite sure what happened.

As I receive my surroundings, I have an intense feeling of déjà vu. The sea washes up on my feet, spraying salt in my face. I remember that smell. *This feels like . . . home.*

Seals play in the water chasing each other. Zipping through the water, doing all sorts of acrobatic movements. One flips through the air, and for a moment, time freezes. The seal turns its upside-down head towards me. Its eyes reflect mine. Water droplets freeze in midair. Then everything speeds up.

*Did I imagine that? Am I going crazy?*

In the corner of my eye, I see a boy at the beach a couple of metres away from me. He's clutching something I can't make out. *Some type of fabric?* I see him shouldering the fabric. I blink and turn my head. The boy is gone. Instead, I see a seal swimming away. *What! Did that seal take the boy? Eat him? Did he turn into it? How did he disappear so fast?* I grab my head, but before I can properly take in what happened, I'm back on the lily pad.

I have reached the end. I look up and just, whoa.

A tree so big it reaches the clouds stands in front of me. One ginormous weeping willow. Its bark is rough and brown. It has big sweeping branches. Probably a gazillion years old. Different types of animals run in and out. Squirrels, birds, raccoons. In front, resting on the roots of it, is a rock. Something tells me that I should kneel in front of it.

As I clamber to my knees, I smell a whiff of sea salt. *Strange.*

A deep melodious voice washes over me. "Meet yourself here. Come to yourself and bear the knowledge."

A leaf slowly spirals down and rests lightly on the rock. In the same fashion my hands are, the leaf glows. A flash of light happens again, but this time, something different happens.

There on the rock is a different object.

A seal-skin coat.

*by Natalie Sozou* (11 years)  
Toronto, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Kate and Amanda

Kate, the one-year-old cat, sat forlornly inside her small kennel at a local animal shelter. She had been there for a long time. Her owners had abandoned her, and she had been hit by a car. She had a sore leg that she couldn't put weight on and a notch in her ear. She knew her time at the shelter was coming to an end. Then, hope filled her as a little girl with bright-blue eyes, dark-brown hair, and bright clothes walked into the shelter with her mother. Kate put a paw onto the wire mesh of her cage and gave a feeble mew. The girl looked her way and tugged her mother over to Kate. Kate felt hope.

Amanda walked down the long shelter hall and looked at the cats lining the walls in their cages. Their meows were loud and sorrowful. Her heart squeezed, and she felt she was about to cry. She would bring all the cats in the shelter home if she could, but her mother, Rebecca, said she could only pick one. Her mother had decided she could get a cat to help Amanda cope with her mother and father's divorce.

Amanda dragged her mother past some black, hissing cats and stopped beside an orange mother with three kittens. The orange cat meowed lazily and licked a grey tabby kitten's back.

"I want her," Amanda exclaimed.

Rebecca shook her head, "You can only keep one, honey. This mama will want to stay with her kittens, and then we will have four cats. I only said one."

Amanda sighed and plowed on down the hall. None of the cats seemed to click with her. Then, when she was reaching the end of the shelter's hall, she heard a small and fragile mew. She looked over to the source of the sound and saw a smoky-grey kitten sitting in a small cage with a paw propped up on the wire of the cage. Amanda felt her heart break as she saw a notch in the kitten's ear and a limp in the kitten's stride. Amanda tugged her mother over to the kitten and read the name tag. "Kate," it read. Kate looked at Amanda; Amanda looked at Kate, and she knew this was her kitten.

"This is the one," Amanda announced.

Rebecca looked unsure, "Are you sure you want that scruffy old thing? What about that nice white one over there?"

Amanda didn't even look at the white Persian that was stretched out in its cage.

"No," Amanda said again, "this is the one."

Rebecca thought for a minute, then gave in because she felt sorry for the kitten, "Oh, all right."

Kate sat in the back seat of the car. Amanda peered back at her and smiled delightedly. They were now heading home with a new cat. Kate was excited but scared. Had she chosen the right person? She pressed her face up into the wire of the cat carrier. Amanda stroked her face and offered her a piece of bread that she was eating. Kate mewed and rejected the bread.

She looked at her sparkling new collar that Rebecca had bought for her. It was pink with a bell on it. Suddenly, the car lurched to a stop, and Amanda grabbed the carrier and carried Kate out into the sunlight. Kate cowered in the back of the carrier, unsure with her unfamiliar surroundings.

Amanda walked down the drive and opened the door to the country villa that was Kate's new home. She giggled with excitement as she set the cat carrier on the tile floor of the kitchen and opened the door. Kate stayed in the carrier for a few moments. She was scared. Then she took a few tentative steps towards the opening and stuck her head out into the room. It was bright, and it smelled like lavender. Kate emerged fully out of the carrier, and Amanda bounced to her feet, heading towards a bag of cat food. Kate sniffed the air and explored the house. Amanda set out some cat food and water. Kate sniffed the food, then drank the water.

In the evening, when Kate had explored every room in the house, she sat on the couch with Amanda and watched TV on her owner's lap. She looked up at Amanda's face, and she knew she had chosen the right owner. A very strong bond between cat and human had just begun.

*by Taylor Finlay* (10 years)  
Bowsman, Manitoba

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## A Whisper in the Woods

“Jack?” I’d been searching for an hour now, and it was getting dark. Jack had run off to show me something, but I couldn’t keep up. “This had better not be a joke, Jack!” I yelled, even though I knew it wasn’t. I was trying hard not to cry, but I failed. I tried to catch my breath as tears rolled down my cheeks. I was crouched down on a rock; my eyes and face were buried in my blouse. For a second, I thought I heard something, but it was probably the wind and the leaves rustling on the trees. Once I was sure I had stopped crying, I wiped the last of my tears away on my already soaked blouse, ready to go home. After all, Jack probably realized I wasn’t there and went home by himself. I still felt a pang of guilt at the idea of going home; Jack was my best friend. *What if something has happened to him—?*

My thought was interrupted by a noise. . . . It wasn’t a loud noise, it was . . . a whisper? A soft, gentle whisper. All of a sudden, I felt as though someone were watching me. With the thought, I felt ice cold. I could imagine a big ghostly creature lurking behind a tree. I gathered up all of my courage to say, “Who’s there?” But it ended up sounding more like a whimper. A shiver ran up and down my neck as I noticed a shadowy figure coming towards me.

Part of me wanted to be brave, the other part wanted to run home to my parents where it was safe. As the figure moved closer, I decided my fate. I ran through the forest as fast as my legs could carry me. With a quick glance back, I noticed the figure was following me. I could barely make out a dark-green cloak. I stumbled on a log and tripped. I knew I was bleeding, but I didn’t care. The only thing I did care about was getting out of this forest! My hair whipped behind me as I moved swiftly through the woods until I reached home. Not sure if the figure had followed me out of the forest or not, I swung open the door to see my mom in the kitchen pouring a cup of tea, my dad sitting on his armchair with the telephone, and Jack on the couch reading his book of insects and plants, sipping a mug of hot cocoa.

As soon as my mom noticed that I’d come in, she dropped the kettle of tea. “Hailey!” she cried. “Where were you?”

“There’s something out there,” I wheezed as my parents embraced me in a tight hug.

“We were worried sick about you!” said my dad.

“We tried calling all of the neighbours,” said Jack, gesturing to the phone on my dad’s armchair.

“Wait a minute,” I remarked. “You were here all along?”

Jack gave a confused look.

“I was looking for you for an hour!”

Jack slowly took a step back as my parents tried to cool me down. “I was waiting for you all day. Weren’t we supposed to go to the forest?” asked Jack.

“We just were in the forest!” I shouted.

“Sweetie, Jack was here with us the whole day,” said my mom as she and my dad took me to my room. After they closed the door, I lay still on my bed, left wondering—wondering, *Who was that figure in the woods? Who was that kid I was playing with? Where did he go? Why was I in the woods? Why don’t I remember anything that happened the day before?* It was as if my life were a puzzle and it was missing a piece—or maybe more than one piece. As I looked out the window into the forest, something caught the corner of my eye. It was . . . a dark-green cloak.

**by Ella Wilson** (9 years)  
Calgary, Alberta



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **A Dragon's Day**

Hi! I am Noah the bat dragon. Bat dragons can turn into a bat and can turn things into bats. Everyone in my family is a bat dragon.

I like to eat hot dogs with my family, and sometimes we like to eat them every day. Sometimes I breathe fire so that I can cook my hot dogs. I like to fly around and stop on tall things like radio towers. I am six years old, and I go to school in the clouds.

One day, I woke up in the morning. I tried to cook some hot dogs for breakfast. But my whole house caught fire! My dad said, "What is going on?" I told him I was trying to cook hot dogs for breakfast, but the whole house caught fire! Dad said, "Noah! You know you can't cook hot dogs by yourself!" Dad called our friend Ice Dragon, and he breathed ice to put out the fire.

"Thank you so much, Ice Dragon," I said.

"No problem," said Ice Dragon.

Then I flew to school on the flying school bus.

I had fun at school. I flew around the yard with my friends. When the bell rang, we all went in the school to see our teacher, Mr. Adams. Mr. Adams is a shadow dragon, and his whole body is a shadow. His power is turning things into shadows. He is funny! After we went inside the school, Mr. Adams taught us math. We learned about doubles. Then we played fire ball in gym class. And for lunch, my mom packed me burnt hot dogs! At lunch recess, I played with my friend Alexander. He is a frost dragon, and he can turn things into snow. Sometimes when we play, we are silly, and we turn our classmates into bats and snow. We turn them back into dragons if we see our teacher coming!

After school, I flew up the top of the building to look for my mom and dad, but I couldn't see them. So, I took the flying school bus home.

When I got home, I played fire ball with my brother and sister. Then we had dinner. We had hot dogs. This time, my brother used his fire to cook the hot dogs. I told my family about my school day. For dessert, we had a campfire and we roasted marshmallows. I got to start the fire to roast the marshmallows. After the marshmallows, I got ready for bed. My mommy read me a story. I fell asleep during the story because I was so tired. It's fun being a dragon!

*by Noah Murphy* (7 years)  
Stittsville, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Enchanted Garden

There once was a small, quiet town. In the centre of the little town was a very large park. Tucked away in the corner of the park was a secret garden, hidden by tall shrubs and trees.

A witch planted the biggest, most beautiful flowers in the garden and cast an evil spell upon them. If you picked one of her enchanted flowers, you would immediately turn into a garden statue made of stone.

One day, a group of children stumbled upon the secret garden. They were all mesmerized by the beautiful flowers. All at once, the children started picking the witch's flowers and quickly turned into garden statues. Only two children were left, a girl named Olivia and her little brother, Erik.

Erik left the garden to hunt down the witch and steal her wand. He found her house on top of the tallest mountain just outside of town. He crept into her house and stole the wand as she slept.

Erik ran back to the garden as fast as he could and gave the wand to his sister. Olivia announced the magic words, "*Zoola boola goo, zoola boola bee*, break this spell immediately," as she waved the wand. The evil spell was broken, and all of the garden statues turned back into children.

The garden was no longer cursed. Olivia and Erik trimmed the large shrubs surrounding the garden, and it was no longer a secret. All of the townspeople could now enjoy the beautiful flowers.

*by Olivia Miller* (5 years)  
Stouffville, Ontario