

# FIRST PRIZE

## **Iron Heart and Pride**

your presence was a magnet  
which pulled all others in  
but you built your walls so high  
and they were anything but thin

you had a cage around your heart  
it was sturdy, it was strong  
you said you would not fall in love  
you thought it was all wrong

person after person  
thought it would be them  
thought they could change you  
become your precious gem

but you turned them all away  
and kept up your stony face  
you thought they would understand  
but that was never quite the case

a hundred hearts you've broken  
a thousand tears shed just for you  
the numbers are still rising  
and yet you'll never have a clue

you will always be alone  
not even a friend by your side  
all that you will ever have  
is your iron heart and pride

*by Charlotte Cherkewski* (12 years)  
Waterloo, Ontario



# SECOND PRIZE

## Sea Lust

On days when wintry breezes  
Bring in the snowy flakes  
I sit upon my windowsill  
And dream of water's wake.

And all too soon my mind turns  
To thoughts of briny broths  
And hulls of skeletal lost ships  
Beneath the foaming froth.

So far above the breaking sea  
A loathsome gull, wings thin and tattered  
Gales of wind thrust him away  
His body limp on far shores shattered.

Beneath him—icy depths are stirred  
The fishes by their hunger spurred  
To feed on that which in the storm  
Falls to the sea bed, dulled and blurred.

And I—I am amid the waves  
Embraced by arms of writhing sea. . . .

Her waters were engulfing me  
Then with a roll of thunder I  
Was brought back to reality.

*by Esther Siderius* (14 years)  
Kingston, Ontario



# THIRD PRIZE

## The Piper's Music

"It's all in the music, m'dear,"  
The old man whispered  
Conspiratorially.  
The child on his knee  
Leaned close and listened  
To his soft breathing as he explained:

"Not only is it in the notes,  
Bug-black on pages filled with lines,  
Or in the tune itself,  
Tumbling through the instrument  
And out to the open air,  
But also in the way  
You see the world  
While the music's bein' played.  
That's what makes it *magic*,  
Little one."

At the quiet urging  
Of a tug on the sleeve,  
He raised the pipe  
To his mouth  
And blew.  
A long, delicate note  
Flew out:  
High and low bird-songs  
Mingling together.

Singing of enchantment,  
Of wind in the trees;  
Of roaring lions and  
Courageous stallions.  
The pipe and the piper  
Together as one  
Painted grand pictures in sound.  
They sang of great magic,  
And all the world's beauty,  
Which were one and the same, back then.

*by Zoe Coulter* (14 years)  
Lyndhurst, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Inside

Looking through the frosted glass,  
your eyes wide  
with delight, revelling in  
wondrous joy, the feeling of a  
cold window on your cheek  
and a world outside,  
far beyond your reach.

Cars speed by, pedestrians too.  
Nothing has stopped  
in front of you.  
The seasons change—your window too.  
Cold, snowy days morph  
into illusions of warmth and colour,  
shimmering through fretful rains.

Yet stationary you stay,  
locked inside a shadowy space,  
separated by nearly invisible walls.  
Time does not erase the contentment  
of mere observation, and you feel no need  
to join the bustling world outside.  
You look, but don't touch.

*by Shannon Tang* (15 years)  
Vancouver, British Columbia



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## The Daisy

A little girl skipped around in the meadow behind her house  
Filled with gnarly weeds and delicate flowers.  
Braids flying, dress twirling, backpack dangling in hand,  
Soaking in the sun, and breathing in the fresh smell.  
Playfully laughing and singing,  
Stepping on all the filthy weeds and making sure not to step on the flowers.  
She stopped skipping,  
A sudden halt in her tracks.

In the middle of the meadow,  
Looking up at her, a full-grown bright-yellow daisy,  
Right between two scraggly weeds.  
Pulling out the two weeds, she daintily picked the yellow daisy, afraid to harm it.  
She treasured it, admired its bright colour and pleasant smell,  
Held on to it with all her heart, never wanting to let go.  
She would never let it out of her sight.  
She would protect it from storms and from the hands of other greedy children.  
She would bring it home, water it, and look at it every night before she went to bed.  
She would watch it grow up.  
She cradled the daisy and held on to it as tightly as she could.  
She would never give it to anyone else.  
It would be hers forever. . . .

Her gaze wandered the meadow  
And landed suddenly on another daisy far off in the distance.  
Yellower.  
Brighter.  
The stem greener.  
The petals sturdier.  
Ladybug inching on the edge.  
Drops of morning dew still visible.  
She could even smell it from here, its smell more pleasant than ever.  
It was perfect.

The little girl, daisy still in hand, got up, and stood in the meadow,  
Eye on the daisy, never wanting to lose sight of it.  
She ran,  
And ran,  
And ran towards the yellower and brighter daisy,  
Absentmindedly letting go of the old one,  
Not even noticing it drift away in the wind,  
Never to be seen again.

*by Julia Sun* (15 years)  
Markham, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **My Torch**

My eyes reeked of ambivalence  
staring into the mighty flame.  
The embers coiled and the lines of orange to black  
flickered, faded,  
and returned.

Even now the harsh wind blows  
making the torch stutter, utter,  
whisper in pain.

It was a crueler beauty  
than I had known. . . .

The sand beneath cushioned the  
boiling ash,  
the hearth warmed my toes.

*Leave*, the torch seemed to say.  
But I lingered.

*Go*, it seemed to mutter.  
*Don't stay*.

*Don't stay*.

**by Anna Kolbuszewska** (14 years)  
Ottawa, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## To The Tomorrow Kings

Here is to the poets, authors, and journalists,  
To the hosts, the bloggers, the dancers,  
To the musicians, the photographers, the artists.

Here is an invitation, a request, a small offer,  
To the future of creativity, of diversity, and ideas,  
To the future of nations, of democracy, of people.

Death there would be to the aristocrats and dictators;  
Death there would be to the kings and queens of power.

Here is to the artists and writers,  
To the men and women who took it upon themselves.

Here is to the men and women who took their pens and brushes,  
Their tools and knives,  
Their instruments and cameras.

Here is to The Tomorrow Kings,  
To the men and women who have the power to create,  
To the men and women who have the power to destroy.

Here is to The Tomorrow Kings,  
To the power of destruction through changes in ideals,  
To the power of destruction through the freedom of information.

Here is to The Tomorrow Kings in the Age of Information,  
To those who can change the opinions of others,  
To those who can change the opinions of the world.

*by Claire Cheng* (13 years)  
Mississauga, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **A Girl of a Different Colour**

She's one of a different colour, my girl  
She wears her hair in braids  
Not following the trends

She's one of a different shade, my girl  
Doesn't care for kittens  
But rather for the wolves

She's one of a different colour, my girl  
Adopted at age three  
Yet calls herself an orphan

She's one of a different shade, my girl  
Always gets her grades high  
Not bothering to be social

But my girl is me  
Hiding in the background  
Pretending to be perfect, when I don't have a clue

In all our beauty, we all have our flaws  
Hiding in our emptiness, just waiting for a chance  
Wondering when to begin. . . .

*by Liv Dunsdon* (11 years)  
Victoria, British Columbia





# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Caught

Afraid and deep in thought  
a girl stands alone  
with genius ideas that will never be known  
except through her writings  
but those are hers and hers alone

Loud in a crowd  
where she remains obscure  
but when the noise dies down  
and it is her alone  
the words are stammered and stuttered, stuck in her throat

Hours upon hours are spent in her room  
where the words flow out upon the open pages  
an artist standing before a white canvas  
in her own twisted mind  
and be sure it is a twisted mind

Phrases and scenes appear from nowhere  
when she least expects them  
and her defences are down  
when trying to tell someone of her present ideas  
her confidence flakes away, her mind goes blank and refuses to tell

I know this because I have been there  
in the flurry of heartbreaks and witty remarks, which she calls her mind  
fingers itching for a pencil to get it all out  
but she will never tell anyone  
because she knows they will not understand, and she will be caught

*by Gabriella Goodger* (12 years)  
Vancouver, British Columbia



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Trees

A crown of leaves upon her head,  
With earthy soil for her bed.  
A tree has a life—she’s a plant, after all;  
Deciduous lives spring, summer, and fall.  
Take care of our trees, so they don’t come to rest,  
Upon a warm hearth, ashes as her nest.

*by Taea Friesen* (9 years)  
Vancouver, British Columbia



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **The Horse**

I saw you in the wild,  
beautiful and free,  
protecting your herd  
from danger.

I wish I were a filly,  
running close to you.

I want to feel free,  
not captured,  
stuck inside the city.

*by Ivy Asselin-Handy* (11 years)  
Guelph, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Fluffy Bunny**

Fuzzy and happy  
Lovely and cuddly  
Unique and cute  
Friendly creatures  
Funny and fast  
Yummy grass, yummy carrots  
Bushy tail  
Underground burrows  
Nice diggers  
Nature's buddies  
Your loving pets

*by Richard Yu* (5 years)  
Richmond, British Columbia



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Biting Baby**

A mom walked down the street today,  
I think her name was Saby.  
And in a bright blue blanket,  
I think I saw a baby!

I went over to take a closer look,  
And then, a big bite she fast took!  
Saby scolded at her,  
But the baby did it back.

And the baby bit her!  
How mean is she to do that?

*by Teagan Vinke* (7 years)  
Wellesley, Ontario



## Faded

The days of our games have faded away  
You keep the same body, but your thoughts do not stay  
Your shoes you've outgrown, your hair is too long  
Your mother no longer needs to put you asleep with a song

Our days they are shorter  
Our secrets locked away  
When did you decide to forget me one day?

Our adventures we'd set on! Our stories we'd share  
When you lay awake in bed at night, you knew I was there  
But now that you're older, your mind no longer plays games  
You started pushing me out, you did not seem the same

Remember the days we'd run off to our world  
The noises, the songs, the way your hair had once curled  
Big brown eyes, how they shone at me so bright  
You were once a candle, but you've put out the light

Now you don't need me, our love is no longer there  
I sit under your bed alone, loathing the new one who's there  
Is it because she's alive? Because her cheeks are rosy?  
Don't ignore my question, I'm not trying to be nosy

She's alive? What a shame, she could simply not replace me  
It's been us all along! Why can't you see?  
It's been I who's your best, most trusted true friend  
Don't dare shut me out, or tell me it's the end

Say my name once more, ring it clean like a bell  
The new one, she's boring! She's plain! There's no story to tell!  
I hate that I'm gone, how you're pushing me away  
Our once sunny days, have left me lonely and grey

We never speak secrets, or share stories of trouble  
Even as I sit at the end of your bed, I try to be subtle  
Can you see me still? Am I really so far gone?  
How long have you been feeling this way? Please tell me what's wrong!

I see how it is. You refuse to remember  
Has your mind lost its colourful touch? Your imagination dismembered?  
I sit here alone as my face begins to turn clear  
I yell out for you, but my voice you can't hear

What are you doing to me? Is this some kind of scheme?  
I'm rotting away, Why can't you see?  
Unravelling and twisting, my skin begins to shed  
The day you realized I was imaginary  
And nothing but an image in your head

*by Madison Generoux* (15 years)  
Paris, Ontario



## Masks

Masks:

We all wear one,  
Every minute, of every day.  
There's one for our parents, one for brothers,  
One for friends, and one for lovers.  
There is the mask we show to the world,  
And the mask we show only to those closest to us.  
We create masks of lies and half truths,  
To hide ourselves from the world outside,  
From those who might seek to see us,  
And those who would seek to know us.  
Then we put on our masks, and call our lies an identity.  
And it is a lie, to the world, and to ourselves,  
And we know it.

Why humans are so afraid of being seen as we are, even by ourselves, I don't know.  
I just know everyone wears a mask, and is scared to truly show themselves.  
If you search yourself honestly, you'll know this is true.  
Maybe we hide behind masks because of fear—  
Not the fear of our darkness,  
But the fear of our light.  
Deep down inside, we all want to believe we are bright and shining.  
Deep down inside, we all want to believe we are angels.  
What we fear is maybe we are not, or maybe we never were.  
Maybe we fear what others will think,  
If they could see our fear and doubt.  
So we wear masks of calm, confidence, of serenity,  
Even when we are panicking, alone, and afraid of where our lives are leading us.  
Maybe we're scared of being weak,  
Scared of others knowing our weaknesses, and scared even more of admitting it.  
So we pretend to be strong, even when deep down we are screaming,  
Even when we are dying inside  
And crying out for someone, anyone, to hear our pain and hold us until the hurt is gone.  
I know I have.

I wear a mask.

In fact, I wear several: one for family, one for friends, and one for my little brother;  
One for teachers, one for enemies, and one for everyone else.  
I even have a mask for when it's just me, because I'm scared of what I'll find inside.  
I'm scared of seeing me, because I've been hiding for so long, I've forgotten who I am.  
I want to believe, deep down inside, that I'm an angel, despite all that's happened to me,  
But I'm scared to look, because what if I never have been?  
I'm scared to admit that I wear a mask.  
Because if anyone knew, they could see inside me, and see all of me.  
Yet I'm more scared of keeping silent, because sometimes, people need to see me.  
Sometimes, we need to understand we can't hide from who we are.  
Even if the rest of the world wants us to pretend we're someone else,  
Sometimes, we need to take off our masks, and let our souls shine.  
Sometimes, we need to take off our masks, and be heard.  
And sometimes, being heard is more important than staying hidden.

*by Morgen Mulcaster* (15 years)

Belle River, Ontario

## **Midnight Moonlight**

Walking through the orchard  
In the midnight moonlight  
All day in the fields I am tortured  
But at night I walk in the midnight moonlight

Working all day in the hot sun  
Counting the hours till the midnight moonlight  
My work is never ever done  
Walking in the midnight moonlight

Picking the fruit  
Thinking of the midnight moonlight  
Master is always a brute  
Walking in the midnight moonlight

And long after I'm gone  
Songs will be sung about the midnight moonlight  
The story will live on  
Of the midnight moonlight

*by Trent Atkinson* (12 years)  
Kingston, Ontario





## The Watchful Eye

I watch the black night conform  
into the rising rays of morn.  
I watch as the ocean tides churn,  
the waves crashing onto shore.  
I watch as blades of grass unite,  
creating a plush sunken valley.  
Then I watch some more.

I watch as the wind blows,  
rustling the changing leaves off a grown maple.  
I watch as droplets of rain pour down from the sky,  
the darkened clouds crying.  
I watch as the lilies tilt upwards,  
bathing in the freshness.  
I watch as the rocks stay sitting,  
waiting for the storm to pass.  
And then I watch as night once again claims the sky.

I wait—  
silently,  
patiently—  
for the next day to arise.

*by Chiara Barsanti* (12 years)  
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario



# FIRST PRIZE

## The Last Soaris

I've always been different—the weird one, the odd man out. No matter where I go, bullies seem to find me. I don't know why this happens. Some people might call me a nerd. I've always had an escape though: flight. Just seeing the world fade beneath the clouds is enough to take my mind off of my troubles back on Earth. I may never be so-called normal, but I am special. I am the last Soaris.

My story began long ago, in ancient times. The Soaris population served as messengers, delivering information from village to village. We lived openly, raising families, and contributing to society. Nobody knew where we came from, but nobody questioned it. Everything was perfect. When the first World War began, the Soaris population was forced to fight. We didn't last very long. We weren't made for fighting.

After the end of the war, only ten Soaris remained. Out of fear for our survival, we were forced into hiding. Thirteen years ago, the last pure-blood Soaris was born. A girl named Penelope. That's me. My parents were too old to raise a child. They decided to put me up for adoption. I was adopted by a kind human couple, Hector and Jillian. They are the only people in my life who can make me smile. They don't know my secret. I want to tell them, but I just can't. It would put me in too much danger.

A few weeks ago, I was at my locker, struggling to get my lock open. I threw the door open in frustration. A piece of paper slowly drifted to the ground. I groaned and bent down to pick it up. Then I saw what was on it. I froze. There were two words: "We know." It could have meant anything. Then I saw the picture beneath the words. It was an illustration of a girl with her arms extended in front of her like a superhero, soaring above the clouds. I folded the note up and shoved it into my pocket. I swallowed hard and shook my head. *I just won't think about it. It has to be a prank. Right?*

Over the next few days, I continued to receive these notes. The words seemed to be getting increasingly threatening. "Watch out," said one. "Soon," said another. I seemed to find them everywhere: in my locker, on my desk, in my backpack, you name it. Then there was today. I got home from school and Jillian was waiting there at the door. She had a piece of paper in her hand, her arms were crossed. She held the paper out to me. "We're coming," it said.

"What is this?" asked Jillian.

I held my breath. I could lie to her again, like the countless times before, or I could tell her the truth. I exhaled slowly. "Sit down," I said. "There's a lot I need to tell you." For hours we sat there. She was listening, I was talking. When I finished we just sat there for a few minutes. I could tell she was trying to take it all in.

"Wow," she said, finally. "Wow."

I stared at her. "I'm scared," I said, "about the notes. What's going to happen?"

She reached over and hugged me. "It's going to be okay," she said in a comforting tone. I could tell she was scared too.

I decided to go for a flight, to try and clear my head. It was a bad choice. The fog rolled in unnaturally fast and soon I was off course. It started to rain. I decided I should land and wait out the storm.

When I touched ground, I realized I had no clue where I was. I could barely see three feet in front of me. I was standing on an old cobblestone street, surrounded by deserted houses. Their roofs were caving in, their windows were shattered, their doors falling off their hinges.

"I suspected all along," I heard a voice say.

I jumped. "Who said that?" I asked the invisible source.

"You've known me all your life, and I've known about you too."

That voice, I recognized that voice. I slowly turned around. And then I saw her.

Standing there, she was all dressed in black, knife in hand. “Did you know there’s a ten-million-dollar reward for your capture?” she said. “Why do you think I adopted you?”

*by Emily Nobes* (12 years)  
Burlington, Ontario



# SECOND PRIZE

## Powers

It was graduation day, and all Meera could do was watch her fellow classmates pass on and become recognized as citizens of Akira. The only reason Meera could not stand with them was because of her powers—or rather, her lack thereof.

And in Akira, powers were everything.

So, for a child of some of the most powerful people in the realm to be nothing, not even an Echo, was one of the saddest, most embarrassing, and most humiliating things in the world.

Meera would have given anything, *anything*, to have even been an Echo of power. Because an Echo was still something. An Echo could still be recognized, gain status, have a life. Echoes could still work with the forces of the world, just not to the degree of everyone else.

Meera had *nothing*. Not a drop, not a whisper. She was unable to perform even the most basic of magical tasks, the kind most could master before ten summers. She somehow caused spells she attempted to backfire, potions to explode. She couldn't craft magical devices or interpret the future; nor could she utilize combat magics. Nobody had bothered to suggest she was an Elite; holding the most potent of abilities. Elites could perform magic without trying. Their power was totally instinctive. All they had to learn was control.

Meera got up, quietly excused herself, and left the balcony. When she was away from the amphitheatre, she ran. She knew her presence wouldn't be missed. She tried to focus on running, to block out her thoughts; it didn't help. *I can't help being what I am. It's not my fault I don't have powers! I had all the signs of being an Elite, Nanna said. If it hadn't been for that accident. . . .*

Meera burst through the last of the trees onto a tiny cliff overlooking the bay, and sank to her knees, hugging herself as the tears began to flow. *It wasn't my fault. . . .*

She hadn't caused the accident. *That* she remembered. She was just a victim of it.

She had been barely four years old at the time. It had been a celebration of summer, and everyone was in boats in the bay. There was an attack by the barbarian tribes of the Isles. Her family's boat was boarded, and somehow Meera had fallen overboard. There was panic everywhere, the water churning around her as she tried to swim. There was blood, and bodies. As she sank towards the bottom, a monster of the Isles had swum at her, jaws gaping. Meera tried to defend herself. She reached out, and for a moment was as powerful as the ocean. Then there was nothing. When she awoke, all signs of power were gone, and she was terrified of the sea.

Meera let her eyes drift towards the mouth of the bay, and squinted. Against the light of the westering sun, she thought she saw boats.

She turned, only to come face-to-face with a band of Islanders. She jumped back, close to the edge of the cliff. "Stay back!" she said. "Or I'll kill you!"

The Islanders only laughed, and said something in their own tongue. One of them reached for her, and Meera stepped back . . . into empty space.

With a shriek, she plummeted headfirst into the sea. She hit with a splash, and the roar of bubbles filled her ears. She tried to swim, desperately clutching at the dwindling surface. Panic consumed her, choking her as she flailed about. She remembered. She was scared—scared of the ocean, scared of the Islanders. . . .

No! She *had* been scared of the Islanders. But she had never been scared of the sea. Whenever she was in the sea, she was as powerful as the ocean itself.

Meera reached out, and felt it. The connection. She pushed with her mind, and the ocean responded, bringing her to just below the surface. For the first time, Meera felt powerful. For the first time, she wasn't scared anymore.

Meera gathered the ocean to herself and rose, standing on a column of flowing water, towering above the cliff. "I *warned* you," she addressed the terrified Islanders. Then Meera smiled, and raised her hands.

Meera decided to return to attend graduation. After she left, a seabird flew to the cliff to pick through the remains, hoping for an easy meal. But there was nothing, only scattered bones.

*by Morgen Mulcaster* (15 years)  
Belle River, Ontario



# THIRD PRIZE

## Bookstore Brawl

I push the bookstore door open and hurry inside. A quick glance at my watch tells me I have exactly twenty-three minutes to find a gift for Katrina and get to her party on time.

Once inside the bookstore, I stop and glance around. I spot it, hanging from the ceiling: “Teen Fiction.” Wasting no time, I dart around the display tables to the teen fiction section where the book Katrina has been chattering nonstop about will be. I spy the book sitting on a shelf to my right.

I walk as fast as my wedges allow me, trying to be as quick as possible without twisting my ankle. I stop in front of the book. There’s only one copy left. I say a silent thank-you to whatever higher power blessed me with the last copy of the book, and reach over to pull it off the shelf. I’ve tugged the book halfway off the shelf when the book starts to pull itself in the other direction. I yank harder, but the book resists. *What the hell?* I wonder. I pause for a second before giving the book an almighty jerk. It comes free from the shelf, and I stagger backwards a little bit.

“Hey,” an annoyed voice protests. I glance through the gap in the shelf the book left. One peeved grey eye glares back. “I had that first,” the guy on the other side says.

“Well, now I have it,” I retort.

The grey eye vanishes, and I watch as a tall boy with grey eyes and black hair steps around the shelf to glower at me. “No, I believe you should give it to me,” he suggests in a way that makes it sound less like a suggestion and more like a command.

I pull the book possessively towards my chest. “Make me,” I dare him.

Not my best idea. He lunges forward with surprising speed and grabs the book. Taken by surprise, the book slides a little from my grip, but I tighten it just in time. The stranger’s brow furrows in concentration. “Give . . . me . . . my . . . book,” he grunts, tugging upward.

I cling on like my life depends on it, my feet almost lifting off the ground. “You can’t make me,” I snarl.

“Whatcha gonna do, shorty?” he fires back.

That hit a nerve. Even with three-inch wedges, I’m still on the shorter end and I’d rather not be reminded of this. I swing one wedge and kick him in the shin.

He releases the book in surprise. “Ow,” he yelps.

People are starting to stare at us, but this doesn’t matter. I turn to make a break for the cashier so I can buy the book and go. I get nowhere before the guy lunges forward and grabs me around the waist. “Hey!” I shriek. He lifts me off the ground. “Put me down,” I demand, but I’m out of breath, which makes my voice weak.

“Give me the book first,” he says.

“You’re psychotic,” I wriggle harder.

“Stop squirming and give it! You’re making this hard for both of us,” he scolds.

At this point I can see two bookstore employees making a beeline for us. Every customer has stopped to watch the spectacle. “You’re gonna get us kicked out,” I gasp as I struggle. “Just let me have the book and you come back tomorrow,” I reason.

“I can’t wait that long,” he says.

“Well, I have to buy this book within the next fourteen minutes,” I say. “I’m already late for an important birthday party.” I swing my legs, but Prince Stubborn is a quick learner.

The store employees arrive and separate us. One forcibly removes the book from my grasp. “We’re going to have to ask you to leave,” the other informs us.

“What? But I didn’t . . .”

My protests go unheard as she takes each of us by the arm and guides us outside. “You’re welcome back again tomorrow, but please do not try that again,” she tells us before closing the door.

The guy crosses his arms over his chest and avoids my eyes.

“Well, thanks for that,” I snap. “Now I have to go late to my friend’s party without a gift.”

“Tough luck. That was my brother’s present,” he says unsympathetically.

“Let’s just part ways and hope we never meet again,” I suggest.

“Agreed.” Neither of us moves. I give him one last glare, which he pointedly ignores, then march off towards my car.

**by Rhea Basu** (15 years)

Markham, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Closets and Skeletons

My room had recently been redone. It had caught up to my age, and was more refined and sophisticated. The purple-grey walls were much classier compared to my old neon-green/bright-blue walls.

I stared into my closet mirror, which was quite unique in the fact it was a mirror that also served as closet doors—genius, in my opinion. I looked into my eyes. It was quite a shame I would never actually see myself, rather than just the mirrored image of me. I was wearing old sweat pants that had previously belonged to my mother, and a baggy T-shirt advertising an auto-body shop I had never heard of before.

I had become quite the narcissist, known to stare at myself for long periods of time. Though it was not because I'd fallen in love with my reflection like the great and dumb Narcissus, it was because I was criticizing myself. Every flaw, every imperfection, brutally analyzed and critiqued up to the point where I started hating looking into the depths of mirrors, unless it was to plaster my face in makeup.

I had tricked myself into believing I was pretty, in the sort of anomalous original way. I certainly didn't look like the average models on TV and in magazines, advertising different products in the most seductive way possible. I told myself I wouldn't want to be like them anyway, with their protruding hip and cheek bones, and frail, brittle hair. In fact they looked more like walking skeletons than actual people.

My phone lit up. A game notification. Those were the only messages I got. I opened my phone to check anyway, with the blind faith perhaps someone had texted me because they wanted to talk to me or hang out with me. Zero messages. Zero real friends.

Not that I really minded though. All of the people at my school were losers anyway. My school was known for its lame teachers, lame sports teams, and lame people. I liked to think of myself as a diamond in the rough—a beautiful diamond buried in layers and layers of dull, dirty sand. *Until I am dug up, I will not be able to shine*, I thought.

It would be different next year; my mom was pulling me out of public education to be home-schooled, so she could spend more time with me.

I went to my window. I stared at a group of girls my age walking down the sidewalk—laughing, smiling, and then laughing again. A tear drizzled out of my eye, down my face, and fell from my chin to my shirt. I stayed at my usual spot at the window watching everyone, examining them just as I have myself so many times before. Next there was a biker, an old woman and her dog, a young couple pushing a stroller, and a woman speed-walking in a black skirt.

I went to the living room; it was nice living in a bungalow. I turned on the TV. A commercial for shampoo came on featuring a wet, size-negative-zero model in the shower washing her hair that reached down to her butt. I changed the channel. There was a reality show showing a young, pretty girl gossiping to me through the screen about how her boyfriend dumped her because she wasn't thin enough. I turned off the TV. My head was hurting.

I went to the kitchen to get an Aspirin out of the cupboard. I'd been having more and more headaches lately, the Aspirin helped a little, but these days nothing really helped me much.

I went back to my room and looked at myself again. I saw myself in my complete entirety, including my wheel chair, my nasal cannula, and the giant scar on my naked scalp. As much as I resisted it, they were a part of who I now was, and I couldn't control or diminish this fact.

I slowly got out of my chair and into my bed. My legs served little purpose anymore, just like my entire body. I was so tired despite spending most of my time sleeping. I checked my phone again. There was one text from my mom: "How r u, sweetie? I'll b home soon:)"

I found it amusing how my mom tried to use as few letters as possible while texting, just like the average teenager. I replied, "I'm fine."

I wasn't.

*by Hayley Wilbon* (15 years)  
Winnipeg, Manitoba



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Shattered Glass

In a world too much like our own, lived a young woman named Lucy. One day, Lucy was at the factory eating with her friends, Phillip and George. Beside the three juveniles was a large window. Lucy looked out the window with longing.

“Why must we spend the light hours of the day locked inside the factory, when we are being shaped and prepared for what lies outside its windows?”

“It is because, Lucy,” began Phillip, “Potters mould our minds, not our souls. They prepare us for the next factory, and those in that factory will do the same.”

George watched his two friends continue to debate. After a few moments, he tried to help explain what it was Phillip was trying to say. “We’re in this factory for one reason, and one reason only. That is to ready us for the next factory. We’re not here to be prepared for the outside world. We all know the only way to live our lives properly is to move from one factory to the next. It’s just the way the world works.”

That evening, Lucy sat around the dinner table with her mother and father. She listened to their conversation, thinking about what her friends had told her.

“Where did you go for lunch today?” asked Mother.

“Quick-Food . . . again,” Father replied with a sigh.

“And what did you have?”

“The usual.”

Lucy recognized this particular dialogue. It was what she heard most evenings. Her parents continued to talk about their day, but the young woman didn’t need to listen to know what they were saying. Their discussion would be the same as the day before, and the day before that. Maybe her friends were right. Maybe her parents had never really left their factories after all. Would she?

The next day, she sat at her station as the potter handed out a new exercise. “This exercise is to be submitted exactly one week today. Are there any questions?” Lucy tentatively raised her hand. “Yes, Lucy?” asked her potter.

“Why?” enquired Lucy.

“Why?” He exclaimed, “Because I said so, that’s why! In order for you to move up to your next factory, you must be prepared! This exercise will help you achieve that. Do not be ungrateful! Is that understood?”

Looking around her, Lucy did not fail to notice the incredulous looks sent her way by her peers. She was not known to be rebellious, let alone directly questioning a potter! Both Phillip and George shared a nervous glance, worried for their friend and hoping she would not get herself into any more trouble. The potter continued to watch her, looking increasingly hostile.

Observing the scene before her, Lucy came to a startling realization. She and all the other juveniles were at the complete mercy of the factories. She might as well be on a train heading forever in the same direction, simply stopping at different stations. Only, on this train, the doors would never open. Upset and disheartened, Lucy met the eyes of both her friends. Holding back the tears of frustration that threatened to overwhelm her, she stood up and cried, “Then why do we even have windows?”

Lucy grabbed her chair with both hands and screamed as she ran towards the glass pane. There was a large crash, and the window shattered into a million pieces.

*by Shasta Ritchie* (15 years)  
Brantford, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Blind Beauty

Darkness was all that ever lived in her world. *It is protection*, they said, *necessary to evade all human sins*. She didn't believe it to be true. It was like having nightmares she could not see. Voices all around, a city in motion, but no evidence by sight. Everybody was blind.

Nobody knew how the other felt and everybody was taught nothing. They feigned happiness to cloud their clouded judgement. She never asked a question and no responses were given.

Humidity flooded the air like a water snake swishing through the pitch-black surroundings. There were echoes bouncing off the walls, the sounds long lasting, as if they would go on for eternity.

She leaned forward and crunched her ears, trying to hear what the echoes were whispering. They needed no messengers, it was a task easily covered by their environment.

To her disappointment, it was just the wind playing tricks.

Using the sides of the walls beside her as guidelines, F#32 walked forward carefully. Her bandanna sat uncomfortably on her eyelids like a thick stubborn worm. She tugged at it until it hung looser, fighting the urge to tear it off her eyes. It was a crime punishable by death to remove your bandanna, although F#32 never knew why. *We are blind with and without*, they were told. Although, she wondered how they would know you had taken off your bandanna if they could not see. Still, she never asked.

Every few years, they moved deeper and deeper into the centre. She could feel it, the claustrophobic feeling of being surrounded by chaos. *The outsiders are dangerous, we need to stay away from them*, they sternly warned. And so everybody followed on and on, migrating, but not really knowing whom they were running away from.

"All humans, pay attention to your superiors, we cannot risk any injuries."

She snapped out of her thoughts and marched on. They were all in a line, carefully practised since birth. Their destination was unknown.

"Food, F#32?" Eagerly, she held out her hands.

Wet, dripping mush slipped through her finger cracks. Her lips beckoned her hands closer as she took a huge slurp. Sweet, bitter, neutral, then salty. She was saddened when she finished, for they would only get a meal once in a while. It was enough to keep her from falling to the depths so she was grateful, even though her mouth couldn't even salivate anymore due to her unquenchable thirst. It was the way they lived.

Everyone was equal and beautiful. That was their law, their motto. It was what they lived by and would swear to die by. F#32 didn't think there was anything wrong with that.

"Do not go to the left side, there is danger! We have come the wrong way, we have gone outside rather than inside!"

Everybody panicked, the neat line now a ragged Z formation, voices primitive and similar to those of angry monkeys. F#32 hung on to the smooth wall, hanging on for dear life as gazelles pranced around her anxiously.

A shoulder tore through hers, the impact sending her tumbling backwards. Thankfully, she caught herself and stood up again, her breath noisy and unsure. F#32 regained her calmness only to be sent face forward towards the ground . . . near the left side.

Pain shrieked and pounded on her eyeballs. She desperately wanted to go back to the painless safe zone. They were right. The outside was a predator, feeding on the eyes of people.

"I tripped somebody!" someone cried out in shame.

F#32 waited on her belly. Famine had arrived and had swept her into its arms, stealing her last kick and punch.

After a while, she couldn't feel sharp jabs in her eyes. Instead, she felt pleasantness that began at her skin and coursed through her hair. It was similar to a motherly hand.

The group had left her behind and she felt no remorse. A burden had been lifted and now she was all alone and capable. A worm being cut in two, she had left the other, more shrivelled part behind. F#32 grabbed her bandanna and threw it fiercely to the ground. "I can see!"

She opened her eyes as big as she could and looked around. Vibrant, each difference in shade was unique. It was delightful.

She got up and walked forward. Turning around, she glared at the dark hole in the middle of nowhere, carved into a large gloomy shape. That was where she had come from.

*by Jasmine Yoo* (14 years)  
Calgary, Alberta



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Peculiarities

There are strange things that happen in this town. Everything seems to connect in ways that aren't connected. This whole town is a mystery seemingly impossible to unravel. You step outside and get the sense you are not seeing everything that is out there. There are some things that can only be seen when under the impression they have gone unseen. These *unseens* do things in this town—mischievous things, troublesome things, peculiar things. . . .

Out of breath I gave one last leap, stretching up, my efforts in vain. There was no way I could reach my gloves now. They were floating, hovering just out of reach, drifting ever higher. I supposed it didn't matter in the grand scheme of things. I knew they would be returned to me eventually. Every lost entity in this town was returned. For example a lost key could return in a greeting card and the sender would swear it was not in there when he or she sealed the envelope. On a darker note a lost pocketknife could be returned to its owner, found embedded in their lifeless body a day later. I had once found my thought-to-be-lost silver earrings from my granddad hooked through the ligature of my saxophone. That had been back in grade eight of course, but the memory was still pleasing. I supposed the worst thing my gloves could do would be to strangle me in my sleep, but my gloves were so dainty and elegant—pressed white satin and lace—they hardly seemed capable of murder. They would probably be found under my doormat or in my garden shed.

I had no time to think about that now, I had to be going before some troublesome unseen realized my keys were still in my car. It had been rumoured that unseens did things like that. If in the mood an unseen could simply plop the key back into the ignition, put a brick on the gas, and off the car would go.

I drove back to my house and noted the man on the corner of the street was still there. As far as I could tell he stood there day and night, as still as silence, watching the traffic go by. He never spoke or showed any emotion, he just stayed there, waiting. I couldn't help but wonder how he factored into this, or for that matter how did I. How was I connected to the world? What invisible line drew me to everything else?

The old man smiled his crinkly smile no one ever saw. His face was weathered and his eyebrows rogue, his hair was sheet white and his eyes were icy blue. He blinked twice and vanished, replaced momentarily by another identical man whose only difference was the colour of his eyes: stone grey. The new man pulled a pair of white gloves out of his pocket and passed them to the unseen blue-eyed man. The gloves vanished.

I reached my front porch and felt my stomach rumble. I removed my shoes and slid my coat off before heading towards the kitchen. I adjusted my ponytail as I began to read the recipe. It had been my granddad's favourite potato salad recipe before he died and I missed him more than anything. A lump caught in my throat and I lost the battle not to cry, tears spilling out of my eyes like a broken heart leaking hope.

The blue-eyed man slipped silently through the window and watched his granddaughter fixing supper. Even if he hadn't been invisible she wouldn't recognize him; she never did. One moment he was dying and the next he was very much alive—sort of. He was alive, but in a new body, invisible; that was what happened after death. Now identical to every other unseen dead person, he silently slipped the gloves under a pile of mail. "Oh, Rhylee," he murmured, seeing a tear slip down her face, "I'm here, I'm always right here," but as usual she heard only the wind.

I wiped a tear from my cheek and reached for the mail. As I picked up the letters I saw my gloves. They were folded daintily under a letter from my university. I smiled slightly. *How peculiar.*

**by Makenna Child** (13 years)  
Victoria, British Columbia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Curiosity

Rebecca's excitement grew as she walked up to the house. It was her first babysitting job and she was a little bit nervous. She was fifteen, but other than her dog, she had never been given the responsibility of taking care of anything before. Taking a deep breath, she rang the doorbell.

After a minute, she heard someone coming to the door. A woman and her young son opened it. "Hi, you must be Rebecca," the woman said, smiling. "I'm Mrs. Stevens, and this is my son, Mason."

Rebecca smiled. "Nice to meet you."

The woman invited her in. "My husband will be down in a minute. When he comes, we'll go over everything with you."

Both of Mason's parents talked to Rebecca about how to reach them in case of an emergency and what time Mason had to go to bed, as well as a few other things. The last thing they talked to her about was the bedroom upstairs. "Please do not go into the first room at the top of the stairs," Mr. Stevens told her. "It's locked so you shouldn't be able to anyway, but we just want to stress how important it is you don't."

Rebecca promised she wouldn't, but her curiosity was already beginning to grow.

An hour later, Rebecca was watching television with Mason. She knew she probably shouldn't ask him about the room, but she couldn't help it.

"I'm not sure what's in the room," he told her. "But I think I know where my parents keep the key."

Now Rebecca was really curious. Even though she had promised to stay away from the room, she just had to know what the big secret was.

Mason told her the key was in the drawer next to the sink in the kitchen. Rebecca pretended she wasn't really interested anyway, but looking at the clock, started counting the minutes until Mason had to go to bed. When the time finally came, she waited an hour to make sure he was sleeping. Then she went to look for the key.

She had to move some things around, but she found the key in the drawer Mason said it would be in. She looked at it in her hand. She knew she had made a promise, but she just had to know what was in there. She slowly walked up the stairs and stood in front of the door.

Holding the key in her hand, she took a deep breath and pushed it into the slot. Turning it, she heard the door unlock. Now the only thing left to do was turn the handle and open the door.

With her heart pounding, she turned it. Pushing the door open, she slowly walked into the dark room. As she searched for the light switch on the wall, Rebecca screamed when she felt the claws close around her arm. . . .

*by Brittany Hornell* (13 years)  
Bonfield, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## The Final Days

It all started with that newscast. They reported alien abductions. I remember the mood in our household after that. We laughed, mocked, and joked about this, giggling about how fake it was. Then Father never came home from work. That scared us. We waited, but he never came back. He still hasn't. Then, we found my mother screaming and shaking in the kitchen. Her screams were about *them* and how *they* stole him—we didn't know who. After Mom was checked into the mental hospital we assumed she was referring to Father. My sister and I, we were the only ones left in our family. Thousands of people were disappearing each day. We knew it would only be a matter of time until *they* came for us.

And now, *they've* started just walking around on the streets like *they* own the place. *They* do. We have to keep our curtains drawn and stay in the basement. Every once in a while, *they* knock on the door. It's a hard, cold, petrifying knock. It sends shudders through us. *They* seem to be unstoppable. *They* have ships giving them the advantage of the air, *they* have guns and cannons years ahead of our technology, and *they* are an entire, strong, trained army.

We only have hunting guns, which are uncommon because only licensed hunters have them, and knives, which—who are we kidding?—won't stop *them*. You may be wondering about the military. Dead. All dead. Every last one of them. Their guns and ammo stolen and their tanks ripped apart. Sure, they shot a few of them dead, but there are thousands. The death of a few goes unremembered and unmentioned.

Those who had a plan—an apocalyptic escape plan—don't just live, they thrive in their bunkers. They have weapons, food, water, electricity, and they get to be underground, which *they* haven't discovered yet. But, of course, being the apocalypse and all, the ones with bunkers don't want to share. They are selfish. But can you really blame them? If my sister and I had a bunker, too, we wouldn't give anything to anyone either.

We were unprepared and we underestimated the power of *them*. So, we just watch the slow days go past and hope this day isn't our last. We eat, but food is soon to run out. We drink, but only from our minuscule portion of water bottles we bought on sale one day way before this started. The worst part? We don't have any medicine or pills. If my sister or I get even a measly case of the flu, we could be dead.

This is how everyone in houses lives. At least, everyone who is alive in their houses. My best friend lived two doors down from me. Her parents were also gone and it was down to her and her older brother. One of them, I think my friend, fell, which made noise. Making noise is the number-one way to get your house shot down. And so hers did, blasts through the window and down from the roof. My friend, well, she didn't make it, but her brother is still alive.

This will be the human race's demise unless we do something about it. This thought is the only thought that will make me ignore my growing hunger, the hope we will somehow communicate, fight, and win. I don't care how; we could sign through the windows if we have to. Planning needs to be done. I am working on starting it, spending every moment of my days plotting, but this needs to be a flawless plan. Every day, I come up with a plan so elaborate, you would think it was from TV. But for every plan, there is at least one flaw. Getting the communication started is one big one.

One of my better plans was to post little signs with instructions on our window. That way, the next house could see it, rewrite it, and pass it on. The flaws? We would have to move our curtain, which is another invitation to attack. Also, we would have to leave our basement, which is risky. Finally, we would have to somehow tell the house next door to look at our sign, which is impossible.

So, will these be the last days of Earth, everyone starving and huddled together? They cannot be. We have to fight back. Or else, *they* win, and I cannot accept that possibility.

**by Caitlin Kelly** (12 years)  
Burlington, Ontario

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **The Truck That Had No Friends**

Once upon a time there was a little truck named Trucker. He had no friends. He wanted a friend but nobody wanted to be his friend.

One day a little car came and said to Trucker, “Will you be my friend?” His name was Honker. Honker said to Trucker, “What is your name?”

Trucker replied, “My name is Trucker.”

Then Honker said, “So what do you want to do then, Trucker?”

“Let’s go to the swimming pool,” said Trucker.

“No,” said Honker, “I do not like water!”

Trucker looked surprised. “Why do you not like water?” he said.

“Because I am not a good swimmer,” said Honker looking embarrassed.

“Okay, let’s find something else to do then. I know, I have the best idea, let’s go to the café,” said Trucker.

“That’s a really great idea,” said Honker with a smile. “Let’s do that!”

So Honker and Trucker went to the café and ordered raspberry slurpees. While they were drinking their drinks, Trucker suggested the next day they should go to the swimming pool and he would show Honker how to be a strong swimmer. Honker agreed.

So the next day Honker and Trucker went to the swimming pool and Trucker helped Honker be a better swimmer. And they spent the rest of the summer happily splashing and swimming in the pool.

*by Dominic Cairn* (6 years)

Vilna, Alberta



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Who in the Name of Thistles?

McTavish sat bolt upright in his bed of straw. He heard the rain pouring down in sheets, a lot even for Scotland. But what else had McTavish heard? He knew it had been something like knocking on his door. But who in the name of thistles would be calling on him at this time of night? Grudgingly, McTavish rolled out of bed. As he rested his paws on the floor, something that felt like last night's haggis stuck between his toes. McTavish sighed. Neighbouring cats kept making fun of his messiness, but he just couldn't help it! Trying to forget about the haggis, he walked, his enormous belly sagging, and fluffy tail dragging behind him, down the stone steps of the castle ruin he called home.

Swinging the big wooden door open, McTavish was startled to see a ginger cat huddled on the stone doormat, shivering under a dark cloak McTavish vaguely remembered leaving out one night.

"H-h-hello," she shuddered. "M-might I come in out of the rain?"

McTavish bit his lip. Would she mock his messiness? Probably, but it was pouring rain. Sighing, McTavish stepped back to let the sopping feline in. She bobbed her head thankfully, and entered. McTavish could see her scanning the room with an expression as though she were smelling rotten salmon, which she probably was. Seeing the pinned ears, McTavish became indignant. What was wrong with a few fish bones on the floor? He had just not felt like cleaning them up!

"I'm Jinny. My family drowned in the loch, but I knew how to swim," Jinny said after she surveyed McTavish's messy living room.

McTavish grunted. All this excitement made him hungry, so he sauntered into his stone-cavern kitchen, Jinny following, judging this room too. Dishes were piled high, and the earthen floor was scattered with tuna. Jinny pinned her whiskers in disgust.

After spilling jam in the sink, McTavish trundled out of the kitchen with a plate of scones. He offered some to Jinny. She primly took one and nibbled it, catching crumbs with her paw. She watched, her whiskers still pinned, as McTavish scooped up scones, jamming them into his mouth, mess everywhere.

After warming up, Jinny began telling McTavish all about her daily cleaning schedule, which bored McTavish to sleep. He had no interest in how many times Jinny mopped her floor.

In the morning, the sun woke McTavish. He moaned, remembering the previous night. But when McTavish opened his eyes, his jaw dropped open. The floor had been swept, straw was heaped neatly in corners, and silvery sunlight spilled through the sparkling window. He looked around, and saw Jinny sitting in a corner, humming as she braided lengths of straw.

Jinny looked up at him. "Good morning!" she greeted him brightly. "Could you pass the broom? I've dropped some straw."

"Wuwuzat?" slurred McTavish, feeling like he had just digested large amounts of lead.

"The broom, you!" Jinny exclaimed. McTavish blinked. Jinny huffed her disapproval, and walked across the room, retrieving a stick with a chunk of straw tied to it. It was the only thing McTavish had made himself.

"Don't be so lazy! It can't be nice, living like this! I got a fish bone in my paw this morning! How unpleasant!" Jinny chided McTavish, and he felt a pang of guilt. Brow furrowed, he reached slowly for the mop he had found when he moved into the castle. Maybe. . . .

Jinny smiled. Propping the broom against the wall, she rushed over to help McTavish hold the mop properly; he had been rubbing in the cracks in the floor with the end of the handle.

In the next few hours, McTavish was mopping the room, with Jinny delightedly sweeping ahead of him. To McTavish's surprise, the result ignited a happy feeling within him! Maybe this cleaning thingy wasn't so bad after all! Maybe, just maybe, he could stop living as a slob, and start to be a normal cat. . . .



By lunchtime, McTavish and Jinny had cleaned all the dishes up, put them away, and swept McTavish's room. The castle smelled fresher than McTavish remembered it being when he moved in!

To McTavish's surprise he discovered he loved Jinny's company, so he invited her to live with him—meals, bed, and mop provided. Jinny accepted without hesitation, and to this very day, the two cats happily share the castle, which is now the tidiest in all of Scotland!

*by Maren McIntosh* (11 years)  
Cremona, Alberta



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## The Smart Fool

“But if you leave, who will mop the floors?” Jack paced back and forth, practising his lines as a serf in his school play. “Someone will have to mop these farty floors and—” Jack stopped. “Warty, not farty,” he reminded himself. Jack always wanted to be the real Knight Notaserf, not the backup knight. Anyway, Jack continued reciting for the rehearsal tomorrow. “Someone will have to mop these warty floors and window the washes. . . . Arggh! Wash the windows! I messed up again. . . .”

“Places, everyone! Places!” the teacher yelled. “We have some very exciting news! The writer of this play will come to see our show tomorrow tonight.” *Oohs* and *aahs* filled the room. “Today, our knight is not here, so we will need our temporary backup!” the teacher continued. “Jack, you will not need to be the serf today. Here is the script.”

Jack said proudly, “I know all his lines! I always dreamed of being the knight!” He eagerly bounded up the stairs.

After the rehearsal, the teacher asked Jack to assemble the knight’s costume since he was not there today. Jack walked over to the costume and grunted. “*Humph*. I’m not the knight. I don’t need to put this together perfectly.” He just randomly clipped a few buttons, tussled with the armour, and quickly clipped the plastic sword pieces together. “Done,” Jack muttered. He tossed the costume and sword on the table and raced out for recess.

Later the next day, the teacher received a phone call and discussed it with Jack. “Jack, tonight the boy playing Knight Notaserf is sick and cannot come. So, you will have to play the knight, since you’re the backup. We don’t need too many serfs. Make sure everything is memorized. Is that okay with you?”

Jack’s face lit up. “Yes! Yes! This is awesome! Of course I will! Thanks! Bye!” Jack bolted out the door and started practising Knight Notaserf’s lines, but forgot about the costume. . . .

*Clang! Clip! Crash! Clack!* Jack tackled his costume as he tried to put it on. “There we go! Now I need my sword.” He grabbed the sword from the table and walked onto the stage.

While scenes whizzed past, Jack suddenly thought, *Wait, I didn’t assemble the costume properly, so. . . .* Then he realized it was his turn.

“Oh, um . . . but, King, we are all out of bananas and—” *Clang!* Jack’s armour fell to the ground. *Whack!* Half of his helmet clattered on the floor. *Ting!* One piece of the sword crashed.

The audience giggled. Jack’s face turned sweaty.

*The show must go on*, he thought. “And . . . and. . . .” Suddenly Jack had an idea. He looked at the pieces of armour. “Darn it! I knew I shouldn’t have trusted that blacksmith! Oh well . . . oh! Maybe the monkey can juggle these pieces of armour instead! Still, the gullible castle guard will be distracted and keep watching, and I can sneak in from the window!”

The king looked confused, but Jack stared at him with big eyes, hoping he would understand. Fortunately, the king wasn’t as dumb as he looked. “Oh . . . well, that is a great idea, Knight Notaserf. That will work as well. You may . . . may change into something more . . . more unseen. Nobles, go call the serfs for help and take the monkey too.”

Jack grinned. Even more fortunately, everyone seemed to be forgetting about their lines and actions and making much better ones. More than that, the teacher looked pleased. Everything was going well, and finally the group figured out a way to end the play. The audience roared and cheered.

After the show, the scriptwriter shook hands with everyone. When he reached Jack, he said, “Jack, I realized you changed your lines a bit, and it turned out extremely awesome! Did you do this on purpose?”

Jack explained. “It’s just because yesterday I was supposed to assemble the knight’s costume. I wasn’t the real knight, so I just randomly put it together. I should have assembled the costume properly, even though it wasn’t mine.”

The writer nodded. “Yeah, that’s true. However, the play turned out to be better than the original! It just depends on how you handle your mistakes! I think you are a smart fool.”

**by Andrew Feng** (10 years)  
Mississauga, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## My Trip to the Moon

I was walking home from school as usual when I saw a building I had never gone into before. I thought I'd take a peek. I came closer so I could see the building's name. I read, "NASA Space Centre." I said to myself, "Cool," then went inside.

I went to the rocket section. I saw a door so I walked a little closer when a guard came and said, "Hey, kid, that place is off limits!" I ignored him and went inside the door.

I was in a rocket ship! Buttons were everywhere. I pressed one; it flashed and I set off alarms. The sound rang in my ears; it was loud and I was scared. I saw men screaming in the space centre, so I looked down and I was going up. I had engaged the launch sequence!

In the corner of my eye I saw someone running through the door. It was a co-pilot, and he jumped into the driver's seat. I saw his fingers flying all across the rocket ship and all I heard was *beep*. I trembled behind the co-pilot.

Finally he turned and said, "Kid, what were you doing?"

"I was checking out the spaceship," I said.

"We don't have much fuel, kid. We'll have to land on the moon."

"Great, uh . . . I mean, uh-oh."

I was hungry so I took out a sandwich and water. I accidentally spilled some water; it went on the floor and I said, "Darn." I turned away and then I started to float up. I turned around and saw the water slowly float up.

The pilot said, "We are entering space. You will float, everything else will too."

Soon the moon was in sight and I saw spacesuits. I said to the pilot, "Do we get to wear those?"

The pilot said, "Maybe."

When we got to the moon the pilot said, "I am going to look for some fuel . . . you stay close."

"Okay," I said, "I'm just going to explore." I was on my way to explore the moon.

I soon learned a few things. I learned the craters I see from Earth are huge. I figured out during the day the temperature is -233 degrees and at night it is 123 degrees. I came across bodies of water and plate tectonics. I figured out I can hit a golf ball 2,400 feet on the moon. I also learned if you weigh 180 pounds on Earth you only weigh 30 pounds on the moon. Did you know 49 moons would be able to fit inside Earth? But, anyway, back to the story. . . .

When I returned to the ship the pilot said, "Bad news, kid. I can't find any fuel."

We kept looking through the entire ship and I found a tiny door. I said, "What is in there?"

"I don't know, kid?"

I opened the door and there was a big red can. I took it out and put it on the table. The pilot said, "Kid, you just found our way home! That is fuel!"

We dumped it in the fuel container and headed towards Earth. But the pilot said, "It's going to get bumpy, kid; there is an asteroid field ahead." We swooped, swerved, and turned, and managed to break through. Earth was in sight and then we landed at the space station. Everybody came rushing over to see if we were okay.

I walked home and there was my mom standing in the driveway asking me where I'd been. I said, "I went on a little field trip."

She said, "Where did you go?"

I said, "I got a close-up view of the solar system!"

The next day was Saturday so I decided to see whether the pilot was there. When I got there it was very late and I saw the pilot heading for his car. I said, "Wait."

He stopped and said, "What are you doing here?"

I said, "I wanted to thank you for coming with me to the moon."

He said, "No problem . . . you better be getting home, it's pretty dark. Want a ride?"

"Yes, please. . . . Wasn't it a nice trip?" I said.

When I got home I went to sleep and had a dream about space.

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