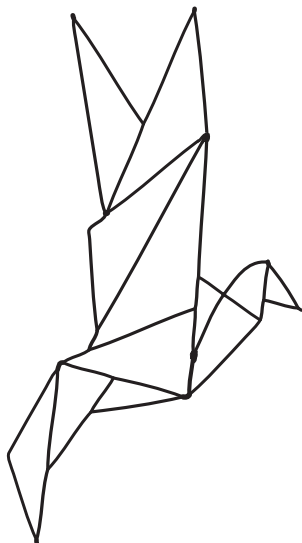


THE POEMS



FIRST PRIZE

Insomniac's Anthem

I dreamed.

A little white rabbit
I was sure I'd seen before
took me down a hole
and I fell like Alice.

And when we fell out
the other end, he said,
"Here's Wonderland."

But it wasn't.

It was a forest of
jagged glass,
its teeth glinting.
And I was sure I would
s
l
i
p.

A boy with the sheen
of immortality
and his troop of lost boys
took me to the rooftops,
where I was left

for the strange birds
and creatures
without eyes.

Then I fell out the other side
into a castle made of silk
where I met a beautiful young princess.

And when I asked her how
to be pretty
she gave me two
white pills
and carried on her way.

But
I threw them aside
because
the jagged-glass forest,
strange birds, boys,
and creatures without eyes

were simply not worth having no circles beneath my eyes.

by Aoife Whelehan (14 years)
North Vancouver, British Columbia

SECOND PRIZE

A Night Like This

It's a night like this
That makes me want to run
And never look back.

I feel like this
Spiral downward .

Will never end.

I can't tell you exactly
Why the bad
Feels so good.

All I can explain
Is the feeling of running
Through the streets at 1:00 AM.

I feel invincible
As the hard pavement
Bounces off my feet.

A warm breeze
Hugs my cool skin.
I stop to listen. . . .

Silence.

There's something magical
About how the streetlights
Glow and illuminate
This dumpy town.

There's something beautiful
About this lonely boulevard.

Tonight,
I dance with the shadows
And sing to the moon,
For the night
Is my new best friend.

by Kelsey Whittington (15 years)
Île des Chênes, Manitoba



THIRD PRIZE

A Bitter Fall

They cling onto their homes
with the hope the time has not come.
But it cannot be hindered,
no matter how much they hope.
The dusk of the year has begun.

They are being forced into starvation
by nature itself.
No longer can they feed off
the sugar they cherished.

They feel the green of their youth retreating,
leaving behind sickly and ill-favoured hues
of yellow, red, orange, and brown.

They wistfully see their bodies,
which used to stay up straight and firm,
yet delicately
are now shrivelling up,
wrinkling in places
they did not even know it was possible.

The wind in which they swayed and danced
during the springtime of their lives
now shoves them violently towards the end they dread.

They embrace their homes and linger,
prolonging the few seconds they have left.
But the decline is unavoidable.

One by one, the fall begins.
It isn't a rapid plunge,
but a gentle drop,
almost as if they're floating.

Some are picked up by the breeze,
and others end up on the ground.
Not that it is of any importance.
They are lifeless.

The people below marvel at the fall,
pointing and grinning as one of them tumbles,
uncaring they have just witnessed
the sombre beauty
of the death
of a leaf.

by Vaishnavy Puvipalan (13 years)
Toronto, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Sundays

I hug my knees and open my eyes
Feast my sight upon the skies
Knot my fingers, unknot them again
Close my eyes and count to ten

The Sunday mornings were the best
Where we would start upon our quest
Of questions where the answers go
Yes, no, or maybe so

See him type his words out slow
Punching letters, to and fro
Words of love, hope, and heartbreak
Poetry so sweet . . . a toothache

The Sunday sunshine seems to be
All that I can possibly see
I knot my fingers, unknot them again
Close my eyes and count to ten

by Alissa Grams (15 years)
Calgary, Alberta



HONOURABLE MENTION

Snow

Falling ever down
In bright white freezing spirals
Every one unique

Awe-inspiring shapes
Mind-boggling patterns
Always causing stares

Silently they touch
The ground, becoming a grand
Picturesque landscape

It is the herald
Of the violent winter
But it is much more

It is the source of
Water and the source
Of the frozen ice

It is the beauty
Of nature put into the
World as a single

Simple, amazing
Unique, cold substance we
All like to call snow

by Matthew Williams (13 years)
Gander, Newfoundland



HONOURABLE MENTION

Walking on the Sand

The waves lap against the shore
White foam breaking against white sand
Small shells left behind
Set down by a gentle hand

A clear sky is filled with golden light
That washes over the clouds
Seagulls fly overhead
Becoming increasingly loud

The soft breeze tickles the clouds
And tosses sand into the air
It teases and laughs
Without a single care

Beneath the sea, clams shut
Obscuring elegant gems
Seaweed sway and sing
With flimsy, curly stems

Schools of fish swim calmly
Oblivious to our land
Not knowing the loveliness
Of walking on the sand

by Jenna Selaman (13 years)
Winnipeg, Manitoba



HONOURABLE MENTION

Raindrops for Company

Lightning creates a firework display,
Thunder claps and booms to my dismay,
Rain pounds to a rhythmic beat,
Getting louder and louder as it hits concrete.

Hiding under the covers, feathery, soft and white,
Trying to block out the lightning's blinding light,
But unfortunately, not succeeding,
The covers illuminate the light with an eerie glow,
Making a shadow horror show.

Reaching for my mother's hand out of fright,
She gives it a little squeeze and holds on tight,
"Don't worry," she soothes, "it will be all right."

"But what about later, when you leave me alone to sleep?
Surely I will get scared and begin to weep."

"Don't be so worried, you won't be alone!"
She repeats in the same soothing tone,
"You may not have me,
But you'll have the raindrops for company!"

"So don't hide under the sheets to block the noise,
If you listen carefully, every drop falls with grace and poise.
There are thousands of little drops falling from the sky,
Not trying to scare you, but in fact, just trying to say hi!

"The thunder and lightning are just trying to join in,
Never staying in one place they've already been.
Chasing one another around in the sky,
Lightning usually wins, which makes thunder cry.

"The raindrops, on the other hand,
Are the calmest of the three,
So there's no reason to be terrified, you see,
When you have such polite little raindrops for company!"

by Maarya Zafar (13 years)
Oakville, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

A Beautiful Spirit

A lonely star shoots across the sky,
So beautiful, yet it's about to die.
Landing down peacefully in a forest, a beautiful place.
Slowly it drains, magic flowing into the ground, leaving no trace.
Suddenly the flowers become fuller, the trees greener, the creek water cleaner.
Its mark has been made, and its spirit lives on.

by Shaylyn Schwieg (12 years)
Brampton, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

It's Not Healthy!

Children these days
Spend their time on a screen:
Texting and gaming
And all in between.

It's okay to game,
I think that's fine;
But it's really unhealthy
To play all the time.

I see too many iPods,
They're what everyone owns;
People ignore us,
Eyes glued to their phones.

Outside in the world,
We see birds, we see trees;
Stay cooped up inside,
These things you won't see.

But maybe, just maybe,
If you try something new,
More doors in this world
Will be opened to you.

What I'm trying to say,
Here's one message I send:
In your virtual worlds,
Those aren't actual friends.

So please keep in mind
As we part with goodbye,
There are new things outside
You should probably try.

by Alyssa Houde (12 years)
St. François Xavier, Manitoba



HONOURABLE MENTION

A Roaming Fantasy

A roaming fantasy, of a young girl
A roaming fantasy, of a new world
A girl who wishes, for nonetheless
An earth, a life, not this big mess

And if her dreams are to come true
A life, much longer for me, for you
If all her goals and dreams are to be true
We must try and help, for her, for you

The hunger has stricken, getting more deadly
Same girl as before, albeit more empty
A hunger haunts the streets of our world
A roaming fantasy, of a young girl

by Emmett Lyall (11 years)
Guelph, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

A Warm Glow

One day I went out to play in the snow,
But instead I felt a warm glow.
It was the sun shining down on me;
What a bright light! I could hardly see.

No more snow to rule the air,
Instead . . . warmth everywhere.
I couldn't believe summer was here
It almost made me shed a tear.

Yes, maybe I miss the cold air
And the snow falling everywhere.
But until winter comes again,
Summer will be my best friend!

by Ellyse Wolter (11 years)
Elora, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

In the Meadow

In the meadow where I frolic under the noonday sun,
Is also where the deer are jumping and the sparrows hum.
In the meadow where I frolic under the big oak tree,
Is also where the squirrels are rushing into their noontime spree.
In the meadow where I frolic next to the tall green grasses,
Is also where the bees are buzzing looking for flowery masses.
And when I am in the forest frolicking next to the brook,
I hear the scuttling of a badger or maybe a woodchuck.
And then when I am in the forest frolicking next to the sycamores,
I see the birds here and there bringing food to their little stores.
And then when I get home again to my little house,
I feel as contented and happy as a little mouse.

by May Lin Howelko (9 years)
Matlock, Manitoba



HONOURABLE MENTION

ZC

To live on a farm is to live in a kingdom where everyone is royal.
The only thing that stops you from doing something wrong is a horse's simple nicker,
or the whisper of a mustang.

When you don't know what to do, run outside and ask your horse.
God created horses with a whisper of the wind and an angel's soul.
The only way to ride a horse is to have full trust in the horse.
The wise mustang always watches you.

The true meaning of life is a horse.
The farm life is the real life.
Horses are our emperors.
The only way to live your life is to live it with horses.

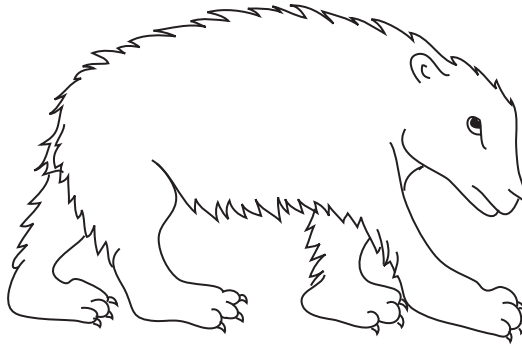
Horses are friends, company, and teachers.
Horses are the only animals that speak.
People are the students and horses are the teachers.
Pray not by yourself, but with a horse.

Nature, trust, control, life, magic . . .
Horses share our life. They go through the same things we do, just the same.
As they experience the same things we do and laugh at the same time as us.
Horses are us.
We are horses.

by Bella Wallin (9 years)
Red Deer, Alberta



THE SHORT STORIES



FIRST PRIZE

The Unknown

Since I could remember Mother would never let me go outside; I always had to stay inside the cabin, but I never knew why. When I was little I would ask Pa why, he would just tell me, “Someday, Clea.”

As I got older he would introduce me to new things. He taught me to shoot a bow and how to survive outside—even though I had never been there. Every day I would study plants and practise shooting, hoping I would be able to go outside someday.

After I turned twelve Pa decided I was old enough to be able to go outside. I was so happy, but scared at the same time. I grabbed my bow and met Pa at the door.

When I took my first step outside I couldn’t believe my eyes. It was so different. There were huge trees everywhere, along with plants, fallen logs, and moss. It smelled so much different from inside of the cabin; the air felt nice. I was surprised by how much I had missed. I didn’t want to go back. I felt free.

Pa led me through the woods where we came to a valley. It had a small creek running through it with a few trees, grass, and flowers. There were goslings, hares, and two deer separately tied up a distance away. At the bottom of the valley Pa showed me where he had planted vegetables. He showed me how to harvest wild plants at different times of the year, such as cattail roots, fiddle heads, and rosehips. On that day I had set my first snare made for squirrels by tying various loops on a very long stick and leaning it up against a tree. I also made my first kill by taking down a bird with my bow. I also learned how to harvest plants.

We made our way back to the cabin, when I realized the cabin wasn’t there. I couldn’t find it until Pa opened the door. I was amazed! The cabin looked just like a hill. Inside, I asked, “Pa, why do we have to stay hidden?”

“Clea, we are running away from people called terrorists. We used to have a democratic government in Canada until terrorists overthrew it. They are violent and dangerous, so we have to stay hidden to be safe,” Mother explained.

Six months later Pa and I were walking back to the cabin when we came across a family of four who claimed they were running away too. Since they had children with them they seemed safe enough.

When we brought them to the cabin Mother looked startled. We explained how we had met them and in the end she thought it would be okay for them to stay the night. Mother got some covers for them to sleep. Later, I learned their names were Evensly, Jack, Arosemeed, and Peter. I was so excited. They were the first people I had ever met besides my family. Soon I became friends with Evensly and Jack. I found out Jack was my age and Evensly was a year younger. I was overjoyed that day.

When I woke up the first thing I saw was Peter had pulled out a pistol and was pointing it at us. “I’m sorry, but we’re starving. You know how to survive out here, we don’t. I’m going to give you ten minutes to go,” Peter desperately told us.

“Okay, I understand, just let us take what we need,” Pa calmly told Peter.

When Peter refused, Pa gave Mother a look. We started towards the door. Then Pa turned, jumped on Peter, knocking him over. He hit the ground hard, pulling Pa down with him. The gun slid away from Peter, landing at Arosemeed’s feet. She grabbed her husband’s gun.

“Peter, let them take what they need,” Arosemeed firmly told him. Peter nodded.

We took our water skins, some food, survival tools, weapons, fur blankets, and clothes. We put our supplies into our backpacks. I said goodbye to Evensly and Jack. They were the first people I had ever met and I would never forget them. Secretly I hoped they wouldn’t forget me either.

I turned to join Mother and Pa into the unknown.

by Amy Gee (12 years)
Holland, Manitoba

SECOND PRIZE

Just the Mud

The muddy boot prints lead into somewhere I can't come back from, though I may return with my physical body intact. My soul will be there, with the men on the ground.

With each hole my bullets rip through not only flesh, but families, whole other lives. Lives like the one I'm fighting for.

That's what I try and remember as my boots unearth the sod. As mud sprays behind me and shots can be heard in the distance, I pretend the dark spots on my skin are the mud also, and not the warm blood of someone who has died in my arms.

Not my Alice.

Not good, kind-hearted, beautiful Alice. What kind of person kills a woman only trying to help the wounded? Who shoots at someone trying to assist the dying? Why could no one assist her? Why couldn't I help her?

It's just mud.

Screams. It's strange, really. I can see them, but I don't hear them. I only see mouths stretched too far open, making no sound. Are they making a sound?

My body makes a sound as I hit the ground. The dry grass that catches my fall makes not nearly as much sound as the hard rubber beneath it.

A tire? A tire with a rope attached. An old tire swing. *Alice, do you remember when our little boy had a tire swing?*

Do you remember the dappled light? Do you remember his laughter, his smiles? Remember how he felt like he was flying, his gap-toothed mouth open, catching the spring air?

Do you remember how his feet looked, covered in mud?

My feet are covered in mud.

There's a growing spot of mud on my chest. It's a strange red colour, like flowers blossoming.

Do you remember, Alice, the garden? Do you remember the first flower we planted together?

The mud is warm. I feel tired. I pull the picture out of my pocket. Alice and our little boy, Matthew.

Do you remember, Matthew, how I love you?

The pattern on my chest does not have the earthen smell of true mud. It has a copper and metal smell.

That's not what I want to smell. I put my face on the grass; it smells like rain.

I am empty. There is no more Alice. No more Matthew. No more war.

Just me and the mud.

And then. . . .

Just the mud.

by Emily Eskowich (15 years)

Melfort, Saskatchewan



THIRD PRIZE

Guardian Angel

The audible crush of metal under the soles of the man's boots could be heard for miles. The young man kept walking. In some subconscious part of his mind he knew he was being illogical; his neighbours were begging him to stop his relentless search . . . he refused. With each step, the sounds of the pile of wreckage under his boots caused another tear to slip down his cheek. *This could have been prevented. I could have prevented this*, he thought as his mind was swirling with the multiple scenarios of what happened—what could have happened.

The harsh wind made the tears on the man's face burn as they continued their relentless path down his face. He paid no mind, however; he knew in mere minutes his search would be over, and the rubble swept away. Light was losing the battle against the foreboding darkness both outside and within the man himself as he stumbled around. The world was turning into a hazy dream for the man, but he had to find his missing object.

Sirens wailed in the distant background; time was almost up. The man struggled for his breath; his body in its already beaten and bruised state was failing. A wail soon broke free from the man's lips as he coughed, forcing his whole body to shake.

The neighbours gathered in horror, watching their friend slowly die in front of them. Women were screaming, tears streaking down their faces as they pleaded with their husbands to help the man. The husbands could do nothing; they had no idea how to safely help their friend. Instead they just held their wives, urging them to go back into their homes.

Another cry of pain came from the man, as blood trickled from the corners of his mouth. The man tentatively raised his hand to his lip, wiping the substance. Then the man slowly looked at his hand, registering what the red liquid was.

For a moment, the neighbourhood held its breath, hoping and praying the man had come to terms with how injured he was and would stop his reckless actions. As his neighbours were gaining hope, the man himself was losing hope. All would be lost.

The man closed his eyes as his knees gave out, no longer able to hold the weight of the man's body. The tears came faster as the man knew his moments were drawing to a close. His hands balled into fists, clenching the broken glass littered on the road. The feeling of the searing pain was becoming more evident as another brutal cough brought more blood into the man's mouth. In a weak attempt to open his eyes, the man saw the blurry outline of a golden object resting on the rim of a mangled car tire.

The neighbours watched in confusion as the man struggled to his feet, taking the most timid steps to seemingly nowhere in particular. Confusion was etched into each and every one of their faces as the man weakly took hold of something, clasp it in his hand as a ghost of a smile danced on the man's bloody face.

The man looked up, finally acknowledging the crowd around him, and in a weak attempt, he turned his palm over. In it, covered in the man's blood, lay a gold ring. Realization dawned, and as the man looked at one of the husbands, no one could make out what the man was trying to say. Everyone, however, recognized the look of helplessness and pleading in the man's eyes.

Stepping forward, a young girl of no more than twenty, walked towards the man, a small encouraging smile on her lips. "How can I help?" she softly whispered.

The man's mouth opened repeatedly, and on his fifth attempt, he managed to utter a name: "Ashleigh."

The young girl instantly understood the man's wishes, and offered her hand to help the man. Taking the girl's hand, the man slowly made his way to his final destination with her help. As soon as he was close enough, he dropped the young girl's hand, and crouched beside the resting woman. The tears freely spilled from the man's eyes, as the last of his energy was being used.

Awkwardly, he sat down, pulling the woman into his lap. And in his final moments, he slipped the lost ring onto his own finger, and forced his body to bend as he gave a final kiss to his angel's still body. . . . *My guardian angel.*

by Clarissa Chong (15 years)
Pickering, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

When Halifax Caught on Fire

“Is that ship going to explode?” my brother asked for the fifteenth time.

“Hush! Your guess is as good as mine. It’s only smoke.” I was surprised at how my voice trembled, and only then did I realize how fearful I was.

His eyes grew large and worried, and he closed his mouth instantly.

The smoke loomed over the Halifax harbour in a sulfurous pillar, a yawning black pit threatening to devour the once clear sky. Every so often the raging flames on the ship’s deck would hurl a ball of fire into the air. I held my breath while they rose only to have each one burst and dissipate harmlessly.

“Are the Germans attacking?” his little voice asked.

I felt his small hand slip in mine, and it was enough to wake me from my trance. I squeezed it, for it steadied the trembling of my own. “No, it’s not a German ship. Everything will be fine.” My uncertainty was apparent, but we pretended to believe my unstable words.

The faint breeze usually smelling of salt now carried the scent of burnt wood. We stood hand in hand for what could have been minutes or hours, I couldn’t tell. The fire increased, as did my panic, and eventually I couldn’t stand it anymore.

“Come!” I started walking, unable to be still. “We’re going to go find Mother and Father.”

He kept his chin up, though his lip trembled.

We didn’t make it far, for the explosion came.

I opened my eyes to a pain that threatened to consume me. I surveyed for broken bones and found I could move. Trying to recall what had happened proved difficult. All I could picture was my brother’s face, and that thought helped me stand. Though confused by the fact I was streets away from where we had last been standing, I retrieved my bearings quickly.

I walked through the chaos as one would sleepwalking. Everywhere I turned there were bodies on fire, shrieks and cries flooded my ears. Stores stood smouldering or reduced to ashes. Passersby pleaded for help, but I couldn’t slow my search. *The world must be ending.*

My heart leapt wildly, for up ahead I thought I saw my brother. I strained to get another look before losing him in the smoke and ruin.

One cry rose above the others, and for reasons unknown I slowed. It was coming from a flaming heap of rubble, the occupants caged by huge pieces of debris. I could barely make out faces amid the flames, screaming in terror.

Conflicted, I glanced in the direction of my brother, then back at the people who were trapped. *A seven-year-old won’t last long.* . . . My emotions overwhelmed me. Time slowed to a halt, and I suddenly felt exhausted. Was I to sacrifice my brother for people I hadn’t met?

After one last look in his direction, I turned to the fire. *I’m so sorry, Little One. I couldn’t leave them burning alive.*

I tore at the pieces obstructing their escape, madness and adrenaline lending me strength. When I created a large enough hole I reached inside, aiding those who could move and lifting out the unconscious. We lay in a coughing, heaving heap.

I sorted through the faceless bodies, shying from their vacant eyes. Lifting the last tiny figure, my heart leapt to my throat. Under the grime and blood was a face I couldn’t mistake. His eyelashes fluttered at my touch, and his hand slipped in mine once more.

I turned incredulously towards the street, looking for the apparition. And at once I understood: I’d seen only what I wished to see. Had I followed it I would have lost my brother. “Everything will be fine,” I whispered, certain this time. I smiled at the sky, tears stinging the cuts on my cheeks.

I carried his limp form to the citadel.

by Bree Beattie (14 years)
Upper Sackville, Nova Scotia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Refugees

Run. In the last six months I had heard that word more than my brain could handle.

My paws hit the ground fiercely as I ran. I turned my head to the side to see my partner in crime running alongside me. He flashed me his best wolf smile, then darted towards me, dodging a bullet. I glanced backwards to see our assassins running full tilt towards us. You would think by now they would know humans cannot outrun wolves.

A growl from the side made me turn. Ace jerked his muzzle forward, towards an astronomic pile of rocks. Lucky for us, the humans couldn't get over with their massive backpacks. We bounced up and over the rocks. We both stopped at the top and turned. The humans had stopped as well.

Just as we turned back to leave, a noise ripped through the forest, a bullet piercing Ace's shoulder. He yelped and tumbled down the rocks.

I raced down after him and arrived just as he started forward again. I helped him limp forward, but we didn't make it very far before he collapsed and shifted. He got to his feet and started sprinting forward. I followed him until we got to a cliff overlooking a canyon and let out a howl. The sunset told us the night was coming and it would be easier to travel then.

"Shut it, Rio," Ace barked as he trotted back to join me.

"We need to look at your shoulder," I said ignoring his comment.

"It's fine."

"We have the time," I added.

"All right," he mumbled.

He peeled off his shirt to let me take a look. The blood from the wound poured down his back like lava coming out of a volcano. My eyes travelled to the gaping hole in his shoulder. The bullet had done a lot of damage and was visible from an odd angle.

"I think I can get it out," I announced. "It is going to hurt a lot."

"Probably not more than it does right now," he growled. "Get the stupid thing out."

I smiled. He always got in a foul mood when I was the one worrying about him. I guess he felt like he had to be the alpha male because it was only me and him. He probably felt the need to protect me in every way he could, but sometimes it was nice to be able to take care of him.

I brushed the wound with my fingers and he winced. I decided to make it quick and painful. I stuck my fingers into the hole, latched onto the bullet with my nails, and pulled. He yelped in pain and I quickly covered the harsh bleeding with my hand. He handed me his shirt and I wrapped his shoulder.

"Now that is over," he sighed. "How are you feeling? This is the seventh time we have been on the run in six months."

"I miss home," I said truthfully, "but I'm glad I have you or else I wouldn't know what to do."

"It would be harder alone," he said as he swung his legs over the edge of the cliff and let me lean against him. "I know you miss the others as well, but we'll see them again."

"You know what," I said looking up at him. "I'm starting to think home is wherever your loved ones are. I'm done with everyone telling me I cannot go home. They think we're monsters just because we can shape shift. They are shooting at us with guns and bullets, which means we are nothing to them. I just want to be in a place where everyone thinks we are human beings."

"We are not," he declared. "This is who we are and it's very important to always stay true to yourself, even when other people don't believe in you. We are unique, extraordinary, and beautiful creatures and nobody can change that."

I looked up at him and smiled. He could be so sensitive sometimes.

He leaned down and kissed my forehead. Unfortunately, at the same time a bomb went off, indicating our attackers had gotten through the rocks.

Ace jumped up, pulling me with him. He shifted and sprinted away.

I followed him, but not before glancing back. They had taken my whole life from me and they were going to pay. I let out a loud howl, then galloped off after Ace into the sunset.

by Averi Bollenbach (15 years)
Coquitlam, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Between the Lines

“I hate you! I hate you! All you do is ruin my life!” I screamed out, my voice dripping with anger. What had I been angry at him for anyway? These hurtful words were my last goodbye to my brother. The last time I would ever see him. The last memory he had of me. The last argument. How could I have known there was never going to be an apology given?

I woke from my dream and started crying again. Pearly tears laid their tracks along my face. I curled up into a ball, hoping the pain would cease. My eyes felt swollen and itchy, and my breath came in ragged sobs. My brother. He was gone! He had stepped into oblivion and I knew, with sick realization he was never coming back. I screamed as the pain overtook me once again. I physically felt the waves of loss and hurt rolling over me. My heart seemed to throb. I gasped for air, and it felt as though my lungs were burning with the effort. I welcomed the thought of losing consciousness, but no relief was to be given. I succumbed to the hurt, to the loss, to the pain of knowing my last goodbye was full of sheer hate, for the rest of the sleepless night.

My parents were staring at me with concern as I walked down to breakfast. I knew I resembled a living reconstruction of death, but I didn’t care. My mom sighed, long and loud, and started her speech. “Sweetie, it’s been a year since Paul’s death. We are so worried about you.” I know she saw me cringe at the mention of my brother’s name. “You aren’t getting any better. Most children have a few nightmares here and there, but you keep dwelling on it. We have tried to help you, sweetheart, but we don’t seem to be making any progress. Your dad and I feel it’s time to go see a—”

Her words kindled a fire of rage. “A therapist?” I interrupted. “You want me to see a therapist? I can’t go to a therapist! They won’t help! I am not talking about my life to some stranger!” And I knew they couldn’t heal me. After a heated argument I agreed to go, even though I was sure no one could heal a person as emotionally broken as me.

We went to a multitude of different therapists. The first one, a wispy, grey-haired stick of a man, always forgot what I was in for. He said it was his busy season. I chalked it up to old age. I told my mom what was happening and I was quickly relocated. The second one scared me. His cold grey eyes held no respect for me, and I could tell he had never lost anyone. He kept threatening me when I wouldn’t answer. I started to wail at nights again, pain ripping away at the inside of my heart. The next therapist was a woman who was nice to my parents. We thought we had found someone who could mend me. But when we were alone, she seemed indifferent to my worries. I saw her caring demeanour was just a charade, and I yelled at her for her lack of empathy. That was the end.

I was still hanging onto my brother’s last moments with me. My parents’ nerves were frayed. Our family was falling apart. Then we found her, a small woman with unruly red hair and a bright smile. She was the seamstress who started to stitch us back together again. She asked me questions about my brother, and laughed at his antics. We tried a number of methods to deal with my guilt. But I still couldn’t stop dreaming about him. I began to lose hope. My life seemed to drain out of me like I was a sieve. Then, one afternoon, she pulled out a pen and a sheet of paper. “Write,” she said. “Describe him with as many words as you need.” I laid the pen on the paper and began to write. As the ink flowed out of the pen, the life flowed back into me. I stopped dreaming about my brother at night, but I never forgot him. He was safe, preserved in thin sheets lined with blue. My guilt lifted. I had finally apologized.

by Savannah Parsons (13 years)
Smithers, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Storms at My Fingertips

The sky grew darker and the winds were ripping through the field. But this wasn't the real storm. She didn't know how she knew but something inside Nikki told her something bigger was going to happen.

She turned her face to the sky, rain started to fall. The huge drops hit her face and she knew this was it—it was here. Her eyes changed from a soft brown to a dazzling gold as the sky lit up with jagged lights. The air cracked with sound and Nikki smiled, energy coursing through her veins. She raised her delicate hands in the air and brought them down by her sides with a swift purpose.

The lightning shot down to the soaked grass beside her and crawled up her thighs towards her fingertips. Two balls of pure lighting were resting at her hands. She brought her fingers together and thrust them into the wet air. The lightning shot from her hands and exploded into the dark sky. The energy was all around her and she was in control of it all.

She felt this strange sensation of power and anger. Nikki moved her hands around her body in swirling motions, commanding the winds around her. The wind picked up speed and circled around her. She raised her hands again and the winds lifted her from the ground. Nikki grinned and marvelled at her powers. She raised herself higher to be closer to the storm.

She brought her hands together over her short platinum-blond hair and gathered the storm clouds together. She flashed a grin and pressed her arms out. The rain pounded down harder and the lightning—her lightning—flooded the sky. She forced her hands down and the bright sheet of electricity shot towards the slick grass.

The field lit up in a raging electric fire. Nikki beamed and threw her head back in utter glee. This storm was her storm! This power was all hers! She looked down towards the fierce fire she created and laughed. Could she control that too?

She placed her palms downwards and raised them slowly, trying to build up the fire. Nothing happened; the fire still raged, but it would not bend to her will. Nikki shrieked and burst into a star position. The clouds opened and pushed out a tidal wave of raindrops. The fire hissed and crackled below as Nikki watched it slowly die. The fire was doused and left nothing but a charred field and a sky filled with thick smoke. Nikki stopped the winds and let herself drop to the ground. She urged the storm to slow down.

She lay down on the burnt field looking towards the smoky sky. The storm stopped altogether, leaving Nikki drained of energy. Every feeling of power-induced rage had left. Nikki smiled lazily at the sky. She had started an extraordinary storm that beckoned to her every call. Nikki sighed and let her eyes close as she drifted off to sleep.

Nikki awoke gasping for breath. She was choking on the heavy smell of smoke. Could it be true?

She ripped off her covers and ran to the washroom. She switched on the light and peered at herself in the mirror. She was soaked! Nikki sucked in a breath. Was her dream real? “No, it couldn't be,” she whispered.

Her body started trembling. She wiped her eyes and ran back to her room to check the time on her smart phone. It was already seven-thirty; she was going to be late for school!

Nikki quickly changed out of her sopping clothes into clean, dry ones. She went to grab her cell, but missed it in the rush and it clattered to the ground. Nikki dove to grab it and saw the screen had shattered. She screamed in frustration.

Instantly the skies turned black, lightning flashed, and it started to pour. She lifted her head and stared out of her window in astonishment. The storm had started in a matter of seconds. Could this be her storm too?

by Sydney Callaghan (13 years)
Calgary, Alberta

HONOURABLE MENTION

My Encounter

“Sit down, Amy,” said a voice.

I was blindfolded and in a room I did not know. *How did the voice know my name?* The voice sounded deep and scary to me. So I sat.

“Tell me what happened. Tell me everything.”

I had no clue what he meant. “W-what do you mean?” I asked nervously.

“Oh, don’t play clueless with me. Officials have tracked alien life forms in contact with you,” said the voice. “Tell me!”

Oh, he meant that everything. I took a deep breath.

“Okay. It all started last week. It was a normal day. At first. The school bell rang and I raced outside of the school doors. I ran up to my best friend, Izzy. I usually walk home with her, so this did not need to be asked. ‘Sure,’ said Izzy, ‘as long as we walk our usual way.’ Izzy always makes this clear. She enjoys walking through the forest outside of town. Personally, I hate it. But I don’t tell her because it is the one place she seems to be happy.

“Soon, we were walking on a path in the middle of the forest. ‘Have you ever had that feeling something big is about to happen?’ Izzy asked me. ‘I don’t think so,’ I replied. We walked in silence, as if we were both thinking about this question. Suddenly, we saw a bright light and heard a boom. Izzy and I were knocked off our feet. Once the pain in my head and back went away, I stood up. ‘What just happened?’ I said. Only, I was talking to myself. Izzy was far ahead of me. I ran to catch up to her.

“I looked in front of me and saw an amazing sight. There was a huge machine in the shape of a plate with a glass sphere on top. It was half in the ground so I could barely see what it actually was. Then, I heard a burst of air and a door opened. A girl walked out. She turned and looked at us. I jumped back. Her skin was green and she had two pupils in each eye. Other than that she looked exactly like, well . . . me!

“The alien began to walk over to us. ‘I won’t hurt you,’ she said. I trusted her. ‘I lost my way when trying to return home and I crashed here. Can you help me return home?’ ‘Izzy, she needs our help!’ I cried. Izzy just stood there. ‘Amy, can we trust something that fell out of the sky?’ Izzy finally whispered to me. But I had no hesitation. ‘I just know we can. Trust me,’ I told her. She slowly started to walk back over to the creature. ‘Okay, we can help you.’ So, we agreed we would meet the creature, who turned out to be named Lis, after school.

“Surprisingly, Lis’s spacecraft hardly had any damage and all it needed was fuel. So, that afternoon, Izzy and I met up with Lis as planned. ‘The fuel is easy to get and I managed to find enough.’ Lis held up a bag full of a goop-like liquid. ‘The only thing is it will take about a week to work,’ she told us with a look of disappointment. ‘That’s good! We can get to know each other better,’ said Izzy. ‘I have always wanted to have an alien friend!’

“For the next week we met at the same place and got to know each other. It was almost as if we were creating a connection—like in that movie *ET*. But, the day came Lis had to leave. We agreed to meet and watch her go. Me and Izzy both walked over to the spot together. Only when we got there, we didn’t see her. We found a note: ‘Tell nobody, unless your life depends on it. I am sorry I had to leave, but they found me, and now they are after you.’ And then I felt a hit over the head and everything went black.”

by Emily Nobes (11 years)
Burlington, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Rainy Day at the Playground

The girl came to the playground today: Alice, who always played with me, slept in the same house as me, ate with me, and laughed with me. But, it was strange . . . actually, quite odd, how I never went to school with her. She often told me about her and her friend Benny baking mud pies in the sandbox and playing with purple goo.

I was always glad for her, how she was happy, but I wanted to go to school too. She wouldn't hear of it. I didn't know why. I thought we were the same age; I wasn't sure though. Why couldn't I go to kindergarten, as well? Alice told me stories of her teacher's kind face, always smiling. She told me of the apple slices and cubes of cheese they got for snack time.

For some weird reason, I never got hungry. I was different from all the other kids.

Anyhow, Alice skipped to the playground with Benny and Katie, their arms linked together. They reached the swings close to the spot in the sand where I was playing mud pies alone, and unsuccessfully. I sighed with frustration with the pies, but my face lit up like a big bright yellow sun when I saw her. I was always alone until the bell clanged for dismissal.

"Alice!" I exclaimed, overjoyed by her sudden presence.

She looked at me, almost humiliated, a red blush creeping up her soft freckled cheeks. She was wearing her amber-orange dress, with blue tulips dotting almost every free space.

She turned away, and then began to chatter full speed on her talking dial to her friends. Her friends laughed. Then Benny, the boy with a messy mop of brown hair, pointed at me—or at least I thought he pointed at me. He was pointing behind me, in the direction of the slide.

"I don't understand," I later told Alice. "Did Benny see through me?"

She frowned.

"He must have superpowers, like Pink Lantern!" I exclaimed, trying to make her laugh.

A smile tugged at her lips, until a grin shone down, showing a gap where her two front teeth should have been. Then it tumbled down to a sad expression, her curtain of knotted carrot hair covering her emerald eyes.

"What's wrong, Ally pal?" I questioned.

"Nothing," she mumbled.

I heard sadness in her unusually quiet voice. "Let's have a contest!" I cried, trying to cheer her up.

She rolled her eyes. "What kind of contest?" she sighed.

"A running contest. A race," I replied.

"Nah, you'll beat me for sure."

"How about a . . . sliding contest?"

"Seriously?"

"Tennis?"

"I don't know how," she responded.

So on this went, and at every choice she shook her head defiantly until I uttered the words, ". . . a skipping contest?"

"I thought you'd never ask!"

Alice loved—no, adored skipping. She was good. Not to say she was *bad* at other sports; it's just *I* was better.

She swished out a creamy white rope with sparkly red handles.

With my grubby fingers, I fished a ratty rope out of my torn plastic bag.

Alice eyed it suspiciously, and I inquired, "How come Mommy gives you all the good stuff? She never notices me."

That Alice is very good at ignoring people. "Whoever can skip the longest wins," she declared. "Ready, set, *go!*"

So we skipped. Although it felt like days and nights passing, it was only about five minutes until we ceased. As seconds ticked to the last minute my heart was pounding out of my chest,

like prisoners banging on bars. I gave a sigh of relief when she gave up. Puffing and wheezing like the big bad wolf, we both collapsed on the green grass, exhausted.

“I won,” I said breathlessly, “now you have to tell me what’s wrong.”

“No!” Alice exclaimed angrily. “That wasn’t the deal.”

“Well, the winner has to win some kind of prize,” I sought, grinning my toothy smile.

“Fine,” she pouted.

“So what’s wrong?” I inquired, for the third and final time.

She turned away so I wouldn’t see her tears streaming down like Niagara Falls.

“Why can’t or why doesn’t anybody play with me except for you?”

Alice twirled a knot in her orange and blue tulip dress.

She’s caught in my net now, I thought. “Why?”

“Oh, Scott—” Then her voice turned to a hoarse whisper. Lightning struck nearby, illuminating her pale freckled face. “Oh, Scott,” she repeated, “You’re only my imaginary friend.”

by Ida Hjerpe (12 years)
Toronto, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Runaways

I always enjoyed doodling, especially in the late hours of dawn when all the orphans were supposed to be in bed. I would light a lantern and doodle under my thin blanket in the notebook my parents gave me before they died.

As I was doodling an impressive alien in my notebook, I was rudely interrupted by an orphan named Alan, whose sole purpose in life, it seemed, was to annoy me until I went bonkers. He had blond curls and golden freckles on his pig-like nose. Before I knew it, the little brat snatched up my notebook and started flipping through its pages. After a while, he said, “These are quite good, you know.”

“Thanks,” I replied curtly.

After Alan tottered away, Ms. Vandela called me down to the front hall where a thin old woman was waiting impatiently. “Lucinda, it turns out you have a long-lost aunt,” said Ms. Vandela. “She has arrived to pick you up. Get your stuff ready immediately.” I raced up the stairs, hastily packed my belongings and gleefully skipped down to the front hall.

Outside, the woman hailed a cab and we were off into the English countryside where she lived. The ride was uncomfortable because not a single word was exchanged between the three of us until we arrived at the grandest house I have ever seen. “Come, girl,” the old woman ordered.

In the house, there were a lot of long dark corridors, which I should stay out of if I know what’s good for me said the woman. “Your room is up the stairs, first door to your left. Unpack, then come down for dinner in one hour.”

“All right,” I replied.

I dumped my bag on the bed, unzipped it, and out sprang Alan from the orphanage with his blond curls bouncing up and down and a big goofy grin plastered across his face. “What are you doing here?” I cried.

“Having an adventure!” he said, pumping his fist in the air.

“Look, you can’t be here,” I scolded him.

“Why not?” he said, sticking his tongue out at me.

“Fine, but stay at your own risk.” Frustrated, I plopped down on the bed and opened up my notebook to do some doodling when he snatched it up and scampered into the corridor, where he ran straight into the old woman.

“Well, what do we have here?” the woman asked to no one in particular, even though I was standing in the corridor. My body stiffened with fear. “Well, we know what to do with you, don’t we,” she said so sweetly it sounded wicked. She dragged Alan by his collar down one of the forbidden corridors.

After I snapped out of my state of fear, I ran after them yelling Alan’s name, but they had disappeared. A door slammed shut around the corner so I sped up in that direction. I turned the corner sharply and almost slammed into a wall. It was a dead end. There was a strange light coming from the cracks and corners of the wall. “What the . . . ?” I muttered.

Then steadily the light grew brighter and brighter and brighter until it was almost blinding. A door materialized in the wall and opened at my touch. What was inside this mysterious room was too incredible to describe. It seemed to go on forever and there were kids everywhere. There, in the middle of it all, was little Alan beaming up at me and holding my notebook.

“Here, I kept it for you,” Alan said, offering it to me. “Now, I know what you’re thinking, but Gertrude can explain all of it.”

“Who’s Gertrude?” I asked him.

“I’m Gertrude.” I spun around and saw the woman sitting in a big comfy-looking armchair I swear wasn’t there before. “Come sit and I’ll explain everything.” I sat down on a small stool in front of her, and this is what I heard: “I travel around the world searching for children with certain special abilities. When I came across your orphanage, I knew I would find someone

special and here you are! But when Alan came along I knew he was special, too, and when you came to save him, it proved how brave I thought you were in the first place.”

“I don’t understand. What are you saying?” I asked.

“You’re both magical! And so are all these other lovely children. Don’t you see, Lucinda, you finally have somewhere you can belong!”

by Gabriella Goodger (11 years)
Vancouver, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Hunter

You stalk the woods, watching your prey. Your clan is suffering from famine, and so you left them in hopes of finding food.

You have been tracking this deer for days, following his footprints. And now, you've finally found him. He is very large—large enough to feed your clan for days.

You walk forward, very slowly and steadily. You know even the slightest sound will ruin any chance of possible survival for your loved ones, and are careful to step over any rocks or dead twigs.

Then the deer suddenly jerks his head up into the air, his nose flaring. You tense up. The deer catches your scent in the breeze, and could disappear any moment now. You know you have to make your move soon, or else everyone you know and love will die. You push yourself forward, bounding out of the bushes, as the deer, startled, dashes away from you.

You know you have an advantage; the deer has a malformed leg. You push yourself forward with every bound, ignoring your fatigue and exhaustion.

The deer tries to leap into the river to hide its tracks from you, but you've seen that trick many times before. You force it away from the river by jumping onto the rocks beside the river bank, startling the deer even more. You know it is tiring, you know now is the time to strike.

You leap forward. The deer squeals when it feels dagger-like objects dig into its skin, before you leap in front of it and deliver the final blow, striking it in the neck. The deer staggers and collapses as you walk beside it and gaze into its brown eyes, filled with honour.

You whine as it closes its eyes, but you know it died with honour and respect. You then whip around and let out a beautiful howl to your clan. As the sole hunter of your pack, it is your duty to keep them alive.

You then grab the carcass in your mouth and start dragging it home. *I'm coming*, you think, as you walk towards your wolf pack—towards your home.

by Jesse Matheson (11 years)
Dawson Creek, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Won Won and His Friends

Won Won is a rich and talented puppy. He can do almost anything. He also has two “best friends” and their names are Cooper and Looper. Cooper’s talent is to detect things and Looper’s talent is jumping.

One day Won Won, Cooper, and Looper were playing in the brilliant shining sun when they found a letter stuck up in a tree. Looper jumped and snatched the muddy and leafy letter and opened it.

They read, “Dear Won Won, Cooper, and Looper. I hope this letter got to you because it’s really important. Read this poem carefully and try to see what it means:

*Find the rainbow flower on this tree,
And then you’ll find yourself in such glee;
Use a petal, and only one petal,
And row yourself across the shining meadow.
Then build a bridge and walk across,
But do not argue, because nobody is the boss;
Find the letters W, C, and L,
And then you’ll find a golden bell.*

From Aunt Nibbly.”

“I don’t get it. What does it mean?” asked Looper.

“Find the rainbow flower. . . ? That must mean the rainbow flower in Rainbow Park!” exclaimed Cooper.

“It wants us to get only one petal of the flower,” said Won Won.

“Come on!” shouted Looper as he headed for Rainbow Park.

“I think we better take this poem,” said Cooper as he and Won Won started for the park.

In Rainbow Park, everything was the colours of the rainbow. And on every tree, there were thousand-petaled, humongous rainbow flowers. As Looper jumped to get the flower, Cooper shouted, “Stop!” and Looper fell to the ground with a bang.

“Are you all right?” asked Won Won in a kind voice.

“I think so,” answered Looper and turned to Cooper, “What?”

“Remember? One petal only,” answered Cooper.

“Oh,” said Looper as he got a petal from the flower and gave it to Cooper.

“Row yourself across the shining meadow. . . ? The only shiny meadow I know is Sparkling Meadows,” he said and they all headed for Sparkling Meadows.

As they reached the river in Sparkling Meadows, Won Won announced, “I think what the poem meant by saying row across the meadow was to get us to ride in the humongous petal and go across the river.”

“Good detective work,” said Cooper as they readied for sail.

While they were getting off the boat, Looper exclaimed, “Look! There’s a gap up there! I bet that is where the poem said to build a bridge and cross.”

“I agree very much with you,” said Cooper.

“Me too,” agreed Won Won.

When they neared the gap, Won Won said, “There are some old boards and nails over there.” And he went to get them. After he got the boards and nails ready, they started building.

When they were done, they went across and found the letters they were looking for: W, C, and L.

“I’ll dig,” offered Won Won and began digging.

Sure thing they found the golden bell, but there was something else too. It was another letter! It read, “Dear whoever you are, you have found my treasure. But there is another one at the top of Goodbye Mountain. It is buried in the letter G. Good luck!”

“Oh no! Not again,” all of them said at once.

by Vivian Xie (8 years)
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Zoiritean Intrigue

“Blackness. That’s all I remember. It was frightening, yet calm. I awoke in that room, all eyes on me. I felt like I was going to die. I had no idea of the new strength I possessed.”

Traversing through the universe, a ship two times the size of Earth circled the Milky Way. “Is the weapon charger working?” a being made completely out of white slime demanded.

“It’s working very well, Lord Slimeman,” declared Slimeman’s second in command, a tall, humanoid reptile called a Zoiritean.

“Good, set coordinates for Earth. Soon, Earth’s mineral resources shall be owned by the Zoiritean Empire.”

The city was dramatically illuminated as Jack Silver strode through the dark alleyway, preparing for a night of hard work. As he walked through the doors, his boss yelled, “You’re fired!”

“Fired?” asked Jack, flabbergasted. “What did I ever do to you or the company?”

“That doesn’t matter. You’re fired!”

“This isn’t fair!”

“I don’t care. Now get out of here!”

Jack was hurt. He couldn’t believe his ears. He decided to go home. As he walked out the door, his boss muttered, “You’re going to need some free time tonight.”

Jack arrived at home where two Englishmen in black suits were waiting for him. Despite it being nighttime, they wore sunglasses.

“Be prepared to defend what is important,” said one of Englishmen cryptically.

“I don’t get it,” said Jack.

“You are part of a government experiment,” the other Englishman insisted.

“Whoa, you’re frightening me,” Jack resisted.

“Believe us or you will die a horrible death. This is your fate, Jack Silver,” the Englishmen said in unison.

“How do you know my name?” Jack stuttered, backing away.

“That is classified!” The Englishmen turned and left.

Jack lay on his bed. Unable to sleep, he gazed into the sky and saw a light too bright to be a star. He stepped outside.

The light zoomed towards Jack. Instantly, the light was fifty feet above him. It was a ship, pointed at the front with a thousand turrets, a hangar bay, and spikes on top.

“Uh oh,” Jack said.

A huge laser emerged from the mighty ship, surrounding Jack. Jack closed his eyes and clenched his teeth while his hair blew in the artificial wind. And then, blackness.

Jack awoke to Slimeman towering over him. Behind Slimeman stood his army, wearing green jumpsuits with purple lines across the front in the shape of an X. “Take him away!” Slimeman shouted at the troops.

As the Zoiriteans marched towards Jack, he held his hand out signalling them to stop. To Jack’s surprise, red lasers shot out of his hands! They tore through a Zoiritean, which then bled shiny blue blood.

Jack was stunned. While he was trying to understand what had just happened, the Zoiriteans captured him. They threw him in a cell with a hard, cold, bare bed.

Then it hit him. *I cannot only shoot lasers out of my palms, but lasers cut through things.* Taking a deep breath, he raised his hands towards the door. *Here goes nothing,* he thought.

Thinking of shooting the lasers activated them. The lasers cut through the door like scissors to paper. The door dropped to the ground.

Slimeman was right there waiting! Jack shot a laser at him. Slimeman split in half. The laser passed harmlessly between the halves.

Jack went pale.

“Summon the Zoiritean army!” Slimeman shouted.

Jack fought for his life. Army and military fighters, led by Jack’s boss, arrived to help. “Jack, there’s a reason I fired you. You’re our only hope.”

Jack hopped into a fighter, but was soon shot down. Before he crashed, Jack fired a missile at the hull of the spacecraft. The spacecraft crashed.

Out of the debris emerged Slimeman. “What? You thought I was dead?” said Slimeman.

The soldiers shot at him, but the bullets passed through him. Slimeman returned fire, shooting slime into the soldiers’ throats.

“Monster!” Jack yelled.

Jack and Slimeman fought, but Slimeman was invulnerable to Jack’s attacks. Slimeman swung a long, sharp piece of metal debris at Jack. Jack ducked, but the object was driven through him. Gasping, Jack sealed his wound with his finger.

“Jack, catch!” Jack’s boss tossed him a grenade.

“Thanks!” Jack called out. Jack threw the grenade into the unsuspecting Slimeman’s chest, simultaneously kicking him into the sky. The soldiers and Jack watched the explosion.

Later, Jack was awarded a military medal, became a recognized hero, and was knighted. Everything was perfect, until the UFO sightings began.

by Sterling Davidson Center (10 years)
Calgary, Alberta

