

# FIRST PRIZE

## Fishing

ARICK WAS LIKE EVERY FISHERMAN in that small coastal Norwegian town; he awoke at seven each morning and went to fish on his boat. He liked to swim and sail like all the others, but where he differed was that he hated eels from top to bottom. He loathed them with every bone in his body. “Why?” you may ask. To know that, you must hear this.

One day when he was a little boy, he fell into the sea when he was fishing with his dad. There were eels up his pants and in his hair. To know how he overpowered great fear, you must hear this story.

One day when Arick was a grown man with a wife and kids, he went out to fish. It was calmer than most. *Good, the winds often blow back into the bay*, he thought as he walked down the trail from his house to the dock. Beside that dock was his boat; it was small, but it did the trick. She could hold enough fish to feed the family and trade for flour and apples. As he got in, looking at the paddles, he thought, *One downside is that I’ll have to row.*

When he was out on the sea looking out at the open ocean, he felt a breeze on the back of his neck. “Not good at all.” He grabbed the oars and began rowing as fast as he could. The wind grew to a gale. It was no use; the wind blew him farther from shore. But what is this? The pier was only a short swim. “That’s it,” he said aloud. Arick dropped the anchor and lowered himself into the water. *You can do this*, he thought, and with that, he started to swim. “Just your average swim.”

With every stroke, he was closer to home; that pier was his only chance. When he was halfway there, something brushed his leg. He froze. *Maybe if I stay still, they’ll go away*, he thought. But a slimy eel wiggled its way up his pants. “No, no, no. Get out. *Rrr.*”

There, he waited for hours. But finally, he found the courage and continued swimming. “*Errr*, I hate this.”

The pier was as close as ever, but the shallows lay ahead, the most eel-infested place. With all of his might, he swam straight into his fear. Every time something brushed him, it took him to the time with his dad.

Soon, as he laid a hand on shore, he was out of there. “Take that, you squirmy devils,” he said with joy. Everyone lived happily ever after—everyone except the eels, of course.

**by Granite Davis** (Grade Five)

Home School

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# FIRST PRIZE

## Barely Audible

YOU WOULDN'T KNOW if she were dead or alive. Her still body lies on the soft ground under the radiant cherry blossom tree in full bloom, the dewy grass caressing her face. Through her hollow breathing, she can smell that sweet, rich, yet delicate scent of the exquisite florals surrounding her. Her eyes flutter open for moments at a time only to observe the bright moon and the brilliant, twinkling stars. She wears a wistful smile, but silent tears are running down her cheeks. She feels the silky, gold Sakura petals gently land on her body, but they linger for a couple of seconds before a wind gust blows them away, into the elegant night sky. She wishes she could just float away, up to the stars, the clement breeze carrying her there. Part of her doesn't—that part doesn't know why she has to go when the only person she's ever loved is right here.

Her mother lies below her, buried in the earth. She remembers her mother's final words and gazes up to the sky for comfort. *"I'll always be with you, no matter where I am. You just need to look up, and you'll see me. Promise me you'll always remember me, right here,"* she had told her, her slim hand on her left breast. And with that, her mother's tender heart had taken its last beat. All she could do was crumple behind the glass separating them as the doctors wheeled her lifeless body away. This deadly disease happened to be contagious, and her mother didn't want her only daughter, the apple of her eye, to contract it.

More tears flow down her statuesque face as she glances up at the divine scene above her. The constellation Lyra is beaming back at her. She gives a weak laugh, in spite of her forlorn mood. Her mother is named after that harp constellation, and it's no wonder why. When she sang, the whole world stopped to listen; her voice sounded exactly like a harp, crystalline and harmonious. She remembers intently listening to the lullabies her mother once sang to her, desperately attempting to clutch on to the final memories of the noble woman who cared for her when no one else did—the only person for whom her feelings could not be described in mere words, feelings deeper than love.

"I miss you, Ma. I really miss you," she murmurs, barely audible.

Now, it might've just been the wind whistling between the old willows, the creek cascading down rocky terrain, birds singing their melancholy songs, or her once vivid imagination, but she can swear she hears her mother's sweet and warm voice whispering back, "I love you."

**by Anne Johnson** (Grade Six)  
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# SECOND PRIZE

## The Ski Trip

IT WAS THAT TIME of year again, time for the annual family Christmas trip to Revelstoke, BC.

*Beep!* went the sound of the school bell. I ran to our car. It was easy to spot because of the ski racks on top, and off we went.

When we arrived at the house in Revelstoke, our family greeted us. My cousins and I went and played in the snow, making forts, which always ended up being the best forts ever because Revy had the best snow!

After the car was unloaded, we headed to the hill. “Yahoo!” I shouted. While my cousin Hank and I were pumped, our other cousin Lizzy was not. This was her first time on the mountain.

The two gondola rides were quite long, which gave me and Hank time to tell Lizzy about the awesome new chair called Stellar.

When we got out of the gondola, Lizzy said nervously, “It feels as if we are on top of Mount Everest.”

“Well, Lizzy, lucky for you there is a way off this mountain, and that way is down. I will try hard not to leave you in my snow dust!”

“Stellar chairlift, here we come!” Hank exclaimed.

All we could hear was Lizzy screaming behind us. She almost collided with the ski patrol worker.

As we were getting on the chairlift. Hank and I heard two ski patrol workers talking about the girl in the pink snowsuit. Hank and I said, “It’s Lizzy.” The chair scooped us, and we almost lost Lizzy, but luckily, I pulled her back as she nearly slipped off the chair.

After we got off the chair, we all knew to go right. Hank and I slowly started out, and when we looked back, we lost sight of the pink snowsuit. So, we stopped and waited a couple of minutes, but she still did not show up.

All of a sudden, we heard a scream: “*Aaahhh!*” And all we could think of was Lizzy.

We skied to the bottom. To our surprise, we did not see Lizzy there, but we did see something else. It was coming towards us down a steep blue run, moving quickly.

Hank yelled, “Lizzy!”

All we could see was a giant snowball with skies and poles sticking out, rolling towards us. The workers at the Stellar chair each grabbed one end of an orange snow fence, and Lizzy rolled right into it.

She said, “Hey, guys! Did you see that? It was epic!”

Hank and I both laughed and said, “At least you can say you made it down a blue run! Now, let’s get you home, Lizzy. I think you’ve had enough for one day.”

*by Kason Coombs* (Grade Five)

École Boréale

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# SECOND PRIZE

## Homecoming

THERE HE STOOD, among his fellow soldiers who made it home. Douglas followed my eyes and saw Papa. He did not realize at first, but soon, a look of recognition spread across his face. Douglas ran to Papa, and I raced after him, eager to hug the soldier.

As I ran closer and closer to Papa, I could define his features that had started to fade from my memory. His pitch-black hair seemed almost identical from the last time I saw him in 1942. Some scars appeared on his face that I did not recognize. One of the most defining scars was what appeared to be a gash that must have healed earlier this year.

We crashed into Papa, and I wrapped my arms around his torso. My chest felt heavy, and my eyes glossed over, making the world blurry. I let out a puff of air that I had been holding since Papa had been drafted. My chest felt light now, the feeling of the ever-growing pit in my stomach dissolved.

Papa pulled away and crouched down to Douglas. "My boy, you have grown so much!" he told the six-year-old. Speechless, Douglas jumped into Papa's arms. Douglas soon pulled away, and Papa turned to face me as he stood up.

"Peggy, I can't believe you are twelve! It seems like just yesterday you were learning how to walk." Papa laughed, but by just looking at him, I could tell he was hiding grief behind his eyes. It left me speechless to think about what Papa had seen, things I thought were too cruel and horrid for human nature to idealize before the war. I surged towards Papa and hugged him. A tear rolled down my cheek, but I soon wiped it away.

"Henry!" I heard Mama gasp from behind Papa.

"Elizabeth!" Papa exclaimed as he limped towards her. Synchronized, they wrapped their arms around each other and savoured the moment. Mama looked at peace for the first time in years, her eyes lost the hard gloss they have had for months and were replaced with warmth that would struggle to show the worries she had.

After a good minute, I glanced at Douglas, and he nodded back. We jumped into the hug. Surrounded with the warmth of my family, I felt the luckiest I had in my entire life, and I knew right then I was undeniably lucky.

**by Julia Buchanan** (Grade Six)  
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# THIRD PRIZE

## The Light

ONCE UPON A TIME in a small town, there lived a young boy named John. He was squinting at a faint light he'd noticed in the middle of Fright Forest. Fright Forest was said to hold horrors worse than a child's nightmare, with spiky trees all the way to the red ponds. The Wonder Woods, however, was the exact opposite, with pixies and three-winged butterflies flying over streams so clear they seemed transparent.

"What is that light all about?" John's best friend, Mike, wondered.

"I'm not sure," John answered.

"Want to go check it out?" Mike asked him.

"You know I can't, and neither can you. Anyone who goes there never comes back," John said.

Mike sighed. He had wished for an excuse to explore Fright Forest since he was a toddler. "I've always wanted to go there. I even carry a special pack with everything I need in case I happen to find myself there. In fact, if I decided to go there right now, I would be perfectly fine." Mike's eyes widened as an idea struck him.

"Oh no. I know what you're thinking and can tell you it's not a good idea!" John exclaimed, feeling panicked.

"I've been waiting for this moment all of my life, and I understand if you don't want to come with me, but I know that, without a doubt, I am going to find out what that light is in the middle of Fright Forest."

As Mike started in the direction of Fright Forest, John realized that there was nothing he could do to stop him, so he started running in the direction of his house. When he reached there, he went straight to his room to gather supplies. He knew that going into Fright Forest would be less dangerous if there were two people. He grabbed some food from the kitchen, and since he didn't own a weapon, he took a knife as well.

John reached the edge of Fright Forest just in time to catch up to Mike. Mike didn't seem surprised to see him as they entered. They used a compass to lead them and finally reached the reason for light. The compass fell out of Mike's hands as they froze in their tracks.

The creature in front of them could only be described as a giant, green, glowing blob that swallowed everything in its path. The blob consumed the compass as they led the monster into a deadly game of tag.

"Mike! We have to get out of here," John yelled. "Which way leads back home?"

Mike looked at John with wide, frightened eyes as they ran in circles. "I don't know," he whispered.

*by Rania Naeem* (Grade Five)

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# THIRD PRIZE

## Lost Together

“IT’S OVER HERE!” Cassidy called.

“The cave?” I asked.

“Yes!” Cassidy pointed towards a gap in the line of trees ahead of us. “I found it!”

Today was the start of the sixth-grade bonding trip. The class was split into groups of three. My best friend, Cassidy, and I were paired with a quiet kid neither of us knew. We called her Girl.

Cassidy wanted to do things her own way. She’d come to this campsite with her family once before and had spent the day exploring a cave. So, instead of canoeing, we were spelunking.

“I’m not sure this is a great idea,” came a quiet voice behind us. I looked at Cassidy with raised eyebrows. It was Girl. This was the first time she’d spoken.

Cassidy moved a few branches, and the cave entrance loomed in front of us. I pulled a flashlight out of my bag and pointed it into the cave. Cassidy stepped in without hesitation. I sighed and followed nervously. Girl came last; her footsteps were slow and quiet.

The silence of the cave filled my ears completely. We stumbled around for a bit, and soon, I smelled fresh air. Instead of the rocky floor of the cave, I felt grass under my feet. The sky was dark and filled with stars. We were back in the forest, but this was different.

“I think we’re . . . lost,” I said.

“We probably just got turned around in the cave,” Cassidy said.

“No, we’re at the other end,” Girl said quietly.

“How would you know? I’ve been here before, so I know the place a lot better than you do.”

“Maybe, but I’m good with directions. Also, listen. Can’t you hear the lake? We were far away from the lake when we started.”

“Should we head that way?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said, and we started walking towards the water.

The forest eventually gave way to a rocky beach.

“The map of the camp showed that the lake was north of the cabins. The cave was off the map, but I’m pretty sure we were heading east. Follow me,” Girl said confidently.

We walked for what felt like hours, but Girl never slowed her pace. She kept glancing at the stars.

“Why do you keep looking up?” Cassidy asked.

“I’m using the north star as a guide.”

Cassidy nodded and kept walking.

Girl stopped, “Do you see that?”

In the distance, a campfire glowed, and around it were cabins. We were back.

“I don’t even know your name.” I sheepishly looked at Girl.

“I’m Beth. Nice getting lost with you,” she said.

Cassidy and I put our arms around her and walked to camp.

*by Willa Holmes* (Grade Six)

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