

FIRST PRIZE

Elastic Bands

Tasseled blankets wrapped
around phantom shoulders
and leather-soled slippers
on zombie feet.
The ethereal shadow is
heavy as a shipwrecked anchor and
light as an abandoned dream.
And the flashlight's beam is a headlamp
in the dark coal mines of twisted nightmares
stealing smiles and fleeing through the night.
Spools of wool wrap as tightly as
oppressive expectations around the
throbbing cavity where the pool of
blood collects.
I whisper tender wishes to be carried
on the gusts of exhaled worries and gobbled up
by the fireflies playing across
the glass panes of my open eyes.
You are there in the empty space
where I cannot see you, reach you, touch you.
You are forever gone, but always here.
Always too far but much too close.
You are the bottle of poison and the butterfly
kisses curing the open wounds,
mending the ragged strips of flesh sliding across
my scalp, like your fingers so often would.
The jagged bones and mechanical organs
build robotic monsters that hide in my
folded clothes, cut into human flesh that is
flexible as elastic bands, which will always
snap
if your curious hands place them under too much tension,
too much strain.

by James B. Laurie (Grade Nine)
West Island College
Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Québec



FIRST PRIZE

Banquet

Scratch scratch, twigs a crack, footfalls
on the forest path. Twigs, branches, legs of
dryads, all gorged on by fiery Bridget.

A fire is needed, big in celebration, the
Sasquatch children have lived, more and
harder than ever before. On the eve of
the seventh day, a banquet is held.

Keep calm paddle on, keep calm portage on;
we kept on when hot, when hot and irritated, hiked on till
we needed to be defibrillated.

Food will never again taste so good even with all the greasy
meals waiting for us at home. This one fire-cooked
meal to honour our tenacious achievement
will be most deliciously special to us.

Pop, hiss, and a faraway rush, a constant laugh
too; the comforting sounds wrap me in their
warmth. This something new, like finding a
blue-black white feather, we put our blistered
feet up and get ready to chow down.

If nobody sees you, then it is most perfectly
all right, the Sasquatch children are together
once more, Bridget roaring, juice tasting almost
ready.

I cried, to think I would be separated
from my brethren, put apart, forgotten; now I
know, even if I am, I will not be separated
from my memories and lessons learned.
All our voices singing together, all our voices
holding forever.

by Robert Hamel-Smith Grassby (Grade Ten)
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FIRST PRIZE

Rooted Seers

Days upon years we've watched and grown,
As the world spurred by seed and cone,
Ageless and robed in downy moss,
Straining boughs span the sky across,

We'll grasp the beams of golden sun,
Trapped in the strands spiders have spun,
The rain we'll harbour from above,
Nests of raven and turtledove,

Encroaching trunks and limbs of steel,
Poison breath from automobile,
Shrinking our rivers, swamps, and soil,
In vats of power we will boil,

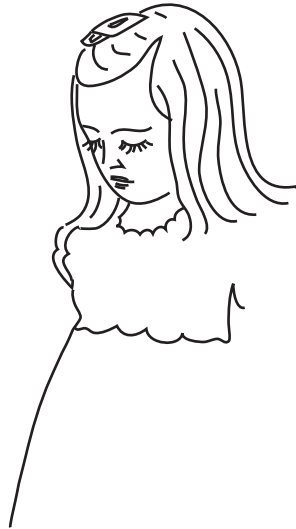
Days upon years we've watched and grown,
From nothing but lichen and stone,
Slowly we shall reclaim our land,
Forests as old as time has spanned,

Through lick of flame and sliding mud,
Preservers resilient bud,
That restarts life from all the ash,
The tacit form of nature's cache,

Help spread our roots and we will soar,
Dancing in light and wind once more,
Listen to hear our story's song,
That we've mutely sung all along.

by Sarah Gutzmann (Grade Eleven)
Argyle Secondary School
North Vancouver, British Columbia





FIRST PRIZE

In Here, I'll Always Be

Dedicated to the memory of my father, Phil.

It seems as if it were yesterday
I sat upon his knee
He held me close as he would say
“In here, I'll always be”
He pointed to his chest and I could not comprehend
That silly old man as he sat in front of me

He watched me as I grew and grew
Sitting me on his knee
He still repeated his same words
“In here, I'll always be”
Though I knew the words
I did not know what they should mean to me

Once I was older I would not stay
Sitting upon his knee
So he gave a look I knew would say
“In here, I'll always be”
And still I never grasped
What he longed to say to me

Now too old to sit on him
Instead he sat beside me
I'd known too well what he would say
But still I let him tell me
“I love you, dear, remember, dear
In here, I'll always be”

So sudden he was gone
My dad, my silly daddy
Stolen away, far away, my one and only daddy
Never had I been so shaken
Never again I'd sit on his knee
He promised he would stay, I heard him
“In here, I'll always be”

One day it struck, his words made sense
I closed my eyes to see
That wonderful silly old man of mine
With me upon his knee
I told him how I understood
He kissed my brow; he knew I could
My dear old man, I finally see
In my heart, you'll always be

by Taylor Bogden (Grade Twelve)
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SECOND PRIZE

Happiness

The butterfly was as white as cotton snow,
its wings so pale they glistened.
Skimming across the gold-painted fields,
in all its delicate elegance.

I watched as it perched onto a petal,
so close to where I crouched hidden.
Oh, how I longed to feel its tender kiss,
upon my frozen fingertips.

And so I chased it from dusk till dawn,
with my tattered net outstretched.
But its timid little soul stayed out of reach
of my desperate, hungry grasp.

At times I'd trip, palms scraping earth,
knees decorated with cuts and bruises.
And ahead, it continued to beat its wings,
to the rhythm of my drumming despair.

I'd scream and weep for all that time
wasted on trying to catch a butterfly,
A creature whose profound beauty
was not one I could ever capture.

Yet I had never seen it cease to
brush past cackling bushes and trees,
As if it searched for a place to settle,
and rest its enervated wings.

I prayed it would hear my silent pleas
for it to land upon my hand,
And fill my mind with tranquillity,
though I knew there'd be no such thing—

For happiness was ephemeral,
and my frail heart contained no home
for its repose.

by Kathy Xie (Grade Nine)
Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School
Vancouver, British Columbia



SECOND PRIZE

White Night

I can't sleep and neither can the sky.
The city lights are trapped,
Bouncing between snow and cloud-covered night.
You tap on my window,
Fingers dancing across the pane.
We do this every "white night";
You like calling it that so I play along.

We meet outside and
You take off, twirling down the street.
I run to catch up.

We end up in the park,
Always do.
We climb a tree,
Sit there and talk,
Until our artificial day is broken by a real one.

by Emma Beattie (Grade Ten)
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Ottawa, Ontario



SECOND PRIZE

In the Kitchen

Beneath the yellowed, peeling cabinets
The stove let off warmth.
Outside, night was falling.

We spoke lightly
Of weight we bore on our shoulders.
With forced smiles
We tried not to crumble.
The depth went unsaid
But we both knew
And so we told our stories.

Our words brought whispers of ice
That swirled around the room
Trying to pull us under, but
They melted over the stovetop

In the warmth of the room.

by Victoria Caplan-Wagner (Grade Eleven)
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SECOND PRIZE

The Photo

The photo shows
A maple leaf flag
Fluttering in a flawless blue sky.
A grand chateau of pinkish stone is
Reflected in the harbour's water where
Shining white sailboats
Settle in the soft winds and romantic waves.
A palm tree on the trail
Promises tropical joy
Pink and purple flowers
Hang in baskets on streetlights, and
Spell "welcome" on the luxurious green grass where
Attracted tourists
Lounge under the multicoloured parasols.

This was the photo that allured me in my home
The thirty-third floor of a skyscraper across the ocean.

With the promise of ease, a peaceful lifestyle,
Studying without stress and anxiety,
Success without pressure.

Now it is pinned on the wall above my desk,
Smirking as I sigh,
Mocking my fantasy.

I stood where the photographer took that shot.
The sky was grey with shadow,
The flag was torn by wind and rain,
The chateau walls were cracked with rotted decoration,
Grubby boats stayed on stormy seas,
A ghost palm tree trembled,
Flower baskets empty,
Street-drugged, homeless people begged for change.

I take the photo off the wall.
Struggling with another night of studying,
I dream again of life on the thirty-third floor.

by Eva Jung (Grade Twelve)
St. Margaret's School
Victoria, British Columbia



THIRD PRIZE

First Catch

He was fresh and fierce when I caught him
His wings pulsed with life and energy—
Arrogance.
He refused to accept me.

He had pride, and I had mine too.
While I held down the transparent plastic cup with authority,
He challenged me—
Such a daring move it was unforgivable.

Thump. Flutter. Thump.
Every time he abused the cup
Bits of him fell.
I could sense his fear.

It was only a bit of dust and powder at first
But then it eventually turned into
A scattered mess of wing fragments and broken antenna tips.
I was winning.

He quieted down. A stationary object
Perhaps that was a sign of final surrender?
My instinct told me no, and that more drama were to come,
After all, a candle always burns the brightest near the end of its journey, right?

He rose again, this time fully equipped
With his last drop of energy and hope
Ready to embrace
The last battle of his life.

More ramming.
More crashing.
More hopeful attempts at life
While the candlelight slowly dimmed away.

He fell and hit the ground
A deadly weight of pride and hatred
His eyes two mirrors of black;
I've never seen anything so dark and penetrating.

Perhaps it was the death that struck me,
For a moment I was blind
From the bright sunlight that had wrapped itself around
The moth's motionless carcass.

by Mimi Meng (Grade Nine)
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Vancouver, British Columbia



THIRD PRIZE

A Summer Night

The moonlight on the water,
Like music in the air
A seamless kind of beautiful,
That's barely even there.

The wind that's playing in the trees,
Like angels dancing 'round,
Moves up and down with even grace,
But barely makes a sound.

The gentle breeze's soft embrace,
Leaves tingles on my skin,
Sweeps you up and off your feet,
Your spirits from within.

And the stars that swim the twilight sky,
So full of wishful dreams,
Wish quickly 'cause one's falling now,
Much faster than it seems.

by Paige Turner (Grade Ten)
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Nanaimo, British Columbia



THIRD PRIZE

Darkness and Light

A tribute to the myth of Hades and Persephone.

There once lived a boy, of shadow bred,
Black in soul, and ruler of the dead.
Feared, loathed, yet respected by all,
For he determined how the living would fall.

Powerful was he, in darkness cloaked,
But deep within, a lonely heart poked.
The riches and power of Underworld hand,
Did nothing to soothe this despairing man.

There once lived a girl, from light she came,
Radiant, kind, and Spring's golden flame.
Child of the Mother, provider for Earth,
She was revered since the day of her birth.

A deity of the seed, her world was fair,
Sunshine entwined in her long, flowing hair.
No sorrow or gloom disrupted her peace,
But not before long, her life would be breached.

He first saw her in the Fates' looking glass,
Stunned by such beauty of the young lass.
Overcome by desire and a passionate need,
"This is my bride," he then firmly decreed.

Alone in a flowery meadow she roamed,
When the earth started to shake and to moan.
He emerged from Hell, a black sight to behold,
And brought the girl to his cavernous hold.

She begged and pleaded, "Sir, let me go free."
In this dark kingdom she was not meant to be.
He refused each time the girl spoke her plight,
For in this shaded land, she was his light.

In the world above, her mother despaired,
The loss of her daughter she could not bear.
A barren cold place the Goddess became,
And the fertile world soon suffered the same.

The immortals demanded her back from the boy,
So Earth and mother would again live with joy.
He agreed, but before her departure she ate
Pure Underworld seed, thus sealing her fate.

Every three months she now spends with him,
When the world above turns cold, vague, and dim.
Yet beneath the surface, the shadows burn bright,
Because they're together—a warm, glowing light.

by Brenna MacInnis (Grade Eleven)
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THIRD PRIZE

The Street

Moonlight floods the dusty sorrow street
When blades of rain resonate like empty drums—
Desperate, hungry drops plunge in a slimy sheet
While the battered, lonely, blackened tar numbs
The feet of all who cross.
Like suction cups it clings to soles
And sinks expectantly like foaming moss.
Cloudy mice race sluggishly,
Patrols of the grey-faced night.
Nervous whispers echo beneath their claws
And the writhing fog seeps from pavement cracks, translucent white.
While the city extends its greedy jaws,
A sandy-haired creature leasures beneath the street lamp;
Its coat, a gleaming tangle of silver webs,
Shivers its glassy mane, shedding the damp
Stars hiding in its fur, illumined by Deneb.
With constellation eyes, like pools of time,
It gazes past you, innate tranquillity.
You spy its horn, a spiralling crystal hammer striking a chime—
Ringing music of harmony and mellow fragility
Floods the brilliant, dewy street—
With drops coasting in a radiant sheet.

by Marley Curtis (Grade Twelve)
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