

FIRST PRIZE

Stones

I am like a stone in the sense
If you skip me across
Crystal waters
I will not skim across the surface
I will sink
With a loud, ear-ringing splash

There is a storm, more rain than sunshine
Inside me
And I possess a desire to shine brighter
Than the stars

I am not delicate
Or graceful
I do not have smoothed edges
And I cannot bite my tongue
Or hold my breath
To make myself quieter
Dimmer
Less volatile

When I speak my voice bounces off the stars
And ricochets around the world

I do not want to
Nor can I be
A flower
Or sunrise

I am a ball of fire
Aggressive and burning
Burning everything
I am nothing less than catastrophic

by Nicole Green (15 years)
Sundre, Alberta



SECOND PRIZE

Moonbeam Shutters

shut in
silver flakes
close curtains
wider eyes
see moonbeam reflections of your face
hitting mine
seeing mine beating
pulse of fingertips
stuttering heart slowing down
valves shutting
cutting edges
routes exiting
closing pathway
me to you
moonbeam brightness flickers
goes out

the light only reaches me now

by Ania Kolbuszewska (15 years)
Ottawa, Ontario



THIRD PRIZE

Love Me All the Same

Mist clouds over moonlit waters.
You stay sitting close to me.
You cry soft tears and I know exactly why,
because death is something you can't escape.

I am going to have to leave you soon.
Please remember me as a faithful companion.
Remember this night by the full moon's light
as we sat nearby the lake's water.

I howl softly, but the sound is weak.
Please remember all the good times we've had,
remember everything that we've gone through.

Please love me even when I'm gone,
and miss me all the same.
Please leave my grave covered in white roses,
and poppies because I'm brave.

I'm going to have to leave you soon,
but love me all the same.
Please treasure all the happy memories
that we made together, best of friends.

Please don't forget the sound of my howling,
when it was stronger than this night.
Please hold my paw until I've wagged my tail the last time,
look away as my head droops.

I don't want you to feel sad,
but please love me to no end.
I know that you'll miss me eternally,
but please love me even when I'm gone.

Don't dwell too much on the past,
but love me all the same.
Remember me as your best friend,
when I'm gone I'll watch over you.

I'll wait for you when you come to me,
I hope you won't have changed too much.
Miss me all the same,
love me all the same.

by Lora Jackson (11 years)
Vancouver, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

A Dream?

I'm in the precious present, dwelling 'lone;
Behind's where I have left a part of me—
A part with demons—devils—of my own
To simply let these dark times sit and be.
I've ventured through the many open gates,
Off into the claws of the dismal dark,
As shadows lengthen at slow, steady rates,
Determinedly, they never miss a mark.
Yet all my life now's been a dreary dream,
As fast and fleeting as a falling flake.
O Heaven! From the golden, glossy gleam,
I'll one day be forced, destined, doomed to wake!
My sight's light did the Raven slyly steal,
For I cannot at all tell false from real.

by Shawn Chang (15 years)
Richmond, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Hollow

Foster, hatred
Sow and reap
Timeless corpse
Eternal sleep

Ponder, age
Balk and wonder
Drifting soul
Pulled asunder

Weep, joy
Smile fast
Cold embrace
Shivers last

Mourn, agony
Bleed afresh
Draining colour
Casing flesh

Scorn, spite
Revolt and hiss
Empty laughter
Pain amiss

Silence, tears
Erode and numb
Gaping hollow
Love undone

by Elizabeth Hua (15 years)
Rosemère, Québec



HONOURABLE MENTION

Lost Memories

Come
whispered the wind
The woman in white
Adorned in lace murmured
Come
The chilled stones were haunted
The woman still muttered
Come

Come
See beauty
See mystery
Come
Sit in pews
Admire windows
Come
See beauty
See memories

Come
Soon I will be lost
A memory without a shell
Come
I carry memories of love and death
Come
I carry memories
Soon to be forgotten

by Annette Gaudet (15 years)
Bellevue, Saskatchewan



HONOURABLE MENTION

Love Takes Its Toll

your once mighty presence
faded to an empty glow
your walls became beaten and broken
fallen down, inside on show

I found the key to unlock your heart
dust shifted to the floor
what shocked me was what lay inside
your heart was simply no more

your lines of lovers dwindled down
all the people gone astray
instead of vying for your love
you've shunned them all away

you wanted them to leave
and yet it pained you to see them go
had you hoped they'd turn around?
it must have hurt when they didn't slow

all the torn hearts have mended
and the tears have gone dry
now when your name is spoken
it is nothing but a sigh

you are not the person
whom we all once knew
you broke down and never quite repaired
but what I once said was true

you never had a friend
to lift you when you got low
and when your heart and pride weakened
you knew it was time to go

you set this world in motion
but you spun it a little fast
now that you've settled down
we've reached the right pace—at last

by Charlotte Cherkewski (13 years)
Waterloo, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Hope for Hiroshima

Lives were lost in a great war,
Many were killed, what was it for?
Lightning struck the overhead sky,
Those who were caught withered and died.

Years later, the pain still lasts,
And the spirits still remember the past.
The rain of fire scorched the earth
And scarred those from death to birth.

But alas, this horrible strife
Has not stopped the cycle of life.
The power of hope still burns bright,
And the survivors finally see the light.

by Orion Ng (13 years)
North York, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Legacy of the Perhaps Within

Why should you fear to lose yourself,
As though your sense of self is so fragile?
Why fear losing something that you can never be deprived of,
As though personalities are as rigid as boards of wood?

Think not of your sense of self as an unalterable entity,
A vow that you are bound to forevermore,
But rather that losing yourself is no different than finding a new self,
Another defining factor of your very existence.

And how does one even truly measure the worth of a soul?
Is its value found within one's humanity, or one's cruelty and spite?
Or perhaps the worn soul of the brave and valiant adventurer,
Is worth the highest price.

But our lives are not only measured in the paths we choose to take,
But also in the paths we dare not tread down,
Fear and dread guiding us,
As our hearts hide behind a mask of our own creation.

And for every way we turned our backs upon,
And every road we never set our feet upon,
There was a *perhaps* within us that perished,
Its legacy cut to nothing more than a sliver of doubt, cast away without a second thought.

You declare you embrace the unknown,
Yet you cower in its presence.
You declare you love freedom,
And yet you are the one to have built this prison around yourself.

Embrace change,
Or your heart will break before you ever learn to love,
Your soul will break before you ever learn to live,
And your wings will break before you ever learn to fly.

by Diba Heydary (13 years)
Toronto, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Rebirth

I travelled through a scented land,
Brushing flowers with my hand.
Lupines here, violets there,
Luscious flowers everywhere.

With the darkness descending soon,
I watched the rise of the crescent moon.
A whiff of smoke from on the breeze,
Twists my head towards the trees.

A glimmer of light from behind the smoke,
A phoenix wrapped in a fiery cloak.
A painful cry, a burst of flame,
Into the ashes from whence it came.

A light appeared in the feathers and ash,
I shielded my eyes from a blinding flash.
The phoenix emerged to live again,
To rule the skies above his domain.

Then some hazy fog rolled in,
And the mystic scene was lost within.
I stood there gaping in wondrous awe.
Did I really see what I thought I saw?

by Petra Simpson (10 years)
Lee Creek, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Mystical

The moon is glistening
On the radiant sea
I lie there, gazing up
Letting the waves glide over me

I then realize
That it's time to proceed
So I wave a goodbye to the water
I know, I'll succeed

*I'll travel around the world, travel to realize the bliss
For I want to find the mystical world, the one I know there is*

The sun pushes itself
Up the misty horizon
The sky is wondrous blue
Like the waves in the ocean

The birds chirp wistfully
Squirrels hiding in the mighty trees
I gather my strength and head on
Feeling the warm breeze

*I'll travel around the world, travel to realize the bliss
For I want to find the mystical world, the one I know there is*

The magnificent sun spreads
Its rays upon the golden sand
I travel through the desert
Wow! What a beautiful land. . . .

The sun is scorching
And the Verdins are flying high
It's a wonderful feeling
To be beneath the crystal sky

*I'll travel around the world, travel to realize the bliss
For I want to find the mystical world, the one I know there is*

by Stuti Sharma (10 years)
Surrey, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Alligator

An alligator sipped some ink.
Soon its face turned pink.
Its eyes began to blink.
Its big tail began to shrink.
Its whole body started to sink.
See you later,
Alligator!

by Alexander Lo (5 years)
Toronto, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Hammy

Hammy is a hamster
who is really sweet
She is a really funny hamster
everybody wants to meet

She is a fur ball
and she is very small
She is brown
and sometimes runs in a ball

She is active and nocturnal
She stuffs her cheek pouches with food
She is really smart
She's always in a good mood

Hammy is the corn lover
In hamster years she's sixty-four
She is eighty weeks old
and she can climb out her cage door!

by Aabjosh Singh (8 years)
Kitchener, Ontario



FIRST PRIZE

The Tunnel

Darkness. That's the only word that my befuddled mind can think of to describe my predicament. As my brain clears and my eyes adjust to the gloom around me, other words begin to fill my consciousness. *Iron bars. Chills. Stench. Old man.* By the time my senses have fully returned to me I've already deduced my quandary.

I'm in prison. Half naked. With an equally undressed old man. Unwashed bodies are all around us in other cells. I stand up and stretch.

"Oh, you're alive are you?" the old man yells.

I jump, startled by the sudden noise. "Yes."

"What?"

"Yes," I say, a little louder.

"What?"

"Yes!" I shout.

"No need to shout, laddie," he hollers. "Don't want to give them more reason to hurt us."

"What?" I ask.

"The jailers, The Empire. They're the reason we're in here. They don't like the dissenters."

"What do you mean?"

"What do you think I mean, laddie? Is your head filled with lead?" he bellows. "Paid all your taxes? Sworn allegiance? Joined the army?"

I shake my head slowly, still confused.

"I thought not. Good to know there are still those who resist."

I am finally catching on. It seems my years of disengagement from The Empire have finally caught up to me. I have lived quietly and without harassment for years; it was sure to come to an end eventually. Suddenly the door rattles open.

A large man wearing black combat fatigues drops a dirty steel tray onto the floor, scattering its contents. I gather them up. Two biscuits, four carrots, and a flask of warm water. I take a sip of the water. I'm not hungry and the old man needs the sustenance more than I, so I hand it all to him.

Tears well in his eyes. "Thank you, laddie," he whispers. "I had almost forgotten what kindness looked like."

Hours later, during what I guess to be night, the old man and I stay up talking. We attempt to speak in hushed tones to prevent the guards' ire from rising; they don't seem to like the old man's hollering. Even so, we are fairly loud.

"I was thrown in here decades ago, for not paying my taxes," the old man says.

"It seems like all they care about is money. What do they do with all that money?"

"Funny? Hardly funny at all. Those crooks take our hard-earned coins and throw it into the military. And what does the military do? Demand more money from us!"

"The king must be the richest man in the world. I wonder how much protection he requires. . . ."

"Erections? Probably the same as any of us; he's a grown man after all."

I blush. "*Protection.* How does he guard all his stuff?"

"By paying people to guard it. It's just an infinite game of buying, selling, and stealing. There's no point to it. His only goal is to rob us of everything we have. He wants us destroyed."

"Did we do something to harm him?"

"No, he still has both arms, but my grandfather told me that long ago one of our people robbed his family of their fortune. Since then it's been their entire purpose in life to impoverish, demoralize, and eradicate us. That's why they're called *Adrasteia*. The inescapable. However, I know a way to escape. I've been working on it for years; look at this." The old man pulls back a loose part of the wall, revealing a tunnel.

My face lights up. "This is great!" I exclaim, and then cringe. I had shouted.

“Are you blind, laddie? This is no plate; it’s a tunnel. And I say we leave in the morning. Good night.”

“Good night,” I reply. “I’ll see you tomorrow morning.”

The morning never comes. Not for the old man at least. I awaken to a pool of blood on the floor where the man had been, and a guard pulling me roughly to my feet. I fear for my life, but instead of killing me, he slams his boot into my side.

“Keep your voice down, or you’ll end up like your buddy.” He closes the door and disappears down the hall.

I am alone. It is still cold, dark, and foul smelling, but I am now by myself. I uncover the tunnel entrance, and step inside. A tear drips down my cheek. As I venture down, I swear I hear a faint echo: “*Stay strong, laddie. And don’t shout.*”

by Christopher Sanford Beck (14 years)

Cochin, Saskatchewan



SECOND PRIZE

Broken Crown

A girl stood in front of an empty throne. It was where her king father sat, and where her brother would sit after him. *My brother*, she thought, *I pity him*. Regen would be ruling a kingdom on the verge of a war their grandfather had started.

Years before she was born, her grandfather had segregated church and state. And with that the church had lost their spot on the royal council and they were still rebelling against the crown over twenty-five years later. The church had never been much of a problem before, but now when it was looking very likely the north would be allying with them, panic had begun to spout in the minds of the nobles.

None of that panic was noticeable in the throne room today. In just two days' time her brother Regen would be marrying their mother's younger sister, Stella Reyes. The Reyes family from the Sealands had been the crown's biggest support since the very beginning; in order to maintain that friendship the crowned family continued to marry Reyes into the family. Stella was a very beautiful girl, and Regen adored her. They made a wonderful couple and their marriage would secure an heir for when Regen ascended the throne. The wedding was also an occasion where noble families from all across the kingdom would arrive to celebrate the marriage. Even northern nobles were coming, which meant her father would be given the opportunity to dispel the rebellious whispers from the north.

"Are you picturing yourself on the throne, Selene?"

The girl turned to see her father standing beside her. King Felix was a good man, he was ruling a dying kingdom with grace and dignity. He was a king Regen could never be. "Of course not, Father. I was just admiring the décor put up for the wedding." At the age of twelve, little Selene could look her king in the eye and lie.

"Hm," her father sighed. "Regen and Stella will rule the kingdom well."

Selene made a sound of acknowledgement. Regen had never been right about anything in his life, and Stella was kind, but that was about it. A kingdom could not be ruled on kindness alone.

"Are you angry I'm marrying you to Brynn Elea?"

To tell the truth, she didn't care. The first thing Felix had done when he had become king was to appoint Thames Elea, a northern noble, to his royal council in hopes it would unite the north with the rest of the kingdom. Now that signs of unrest were showing, her father had promised her hand to Thames's oldest son. Selene was supposed to meet him once his family arrived for the wedding. "If my marriage will delay a war, then I am happy to do so," she said. "The betterment of the realm is more important than love."

Her father watched the princess carefully. "You're a clever one, aren't you?"

Selene's gaze absentmindedly returned to the throne. "Little girls have to be clever; men told us we weren't strong."

Her father's eyes narrowed as he turned to face her. "I wonder what would happen if we were to strip away the gold, take away the title of princess. What would remain, would just Selene be able to survive?"

A twinge of panic appeared in her chest and she whipped around to look him in eye. "Are you threatening me, your majesty?"

The hard look in Father's eyes disappeared and was replaced with a soft smile. "How could I ever threaten my little princess. After all, I am no God. Court is about to begin, so I'll take my leave now." He laid a hand on her shoulder and gave her a tired look. And then he was gone.

Selene watched him leave to his audience, who would fight over land and petty crimes. The north wished nothing more than to be an independent nation. And the Reyes were so desperate for the crown's favour they handed over daughters and sons time after time. The church, even Regen, were all pawns in this twisted game, but not Selene. *I am Princess Selene and I do not*

answer to kings or gods, she thought as she climbed the stairs and sat herself on her father's throne. She looked at the empty throne room and genuinely smiled. "I would make a truly grand king."

by Bailey Gardien (15 years)
Caledonia, Ontario



THIRD PRIZE

Forever and Always

My papa was a young Austrian noble, respected until he chose my mamma, a Romanian. Nonetheless, Papa longed to join the bright, swirling life of the gypsy caravan. Papa couldn't leave the city though. For fifteen years, I didn't see him. Growing up among gypsies I learned to survive. Doltàn, a boy my age, taught me everything and we became inseparable. I told him about Papa; he never cared—he just loved me for who I am. Although seldom easy, I loved my life. The Romani had a beautiful trust and understanding among them. Mamma never worried about me, which gave me something so many children only dream of: freedom.

Frequently, Mamma and Papa wrote letters; he even sent us guildens monthly. To me, my papa was a fairy tale. I liked it that way; he was anything I wanted. One fateful day he became all too real. Mamma was sick with pneumonia. Every day, I sat in our tent, holding her fragile hand, comforting her. One particular day, she was unresponsive, cheeks flushed with fever. Suddenly she sat up, gripped my hand, and looked straight through my dark green eyes into my soul. "Mizelda, you must go live with your father. Promise me—" Before finishing, she collapsed against me, the life draining from her hazel eyes.

Overwhelmed, I left the tent where I'd spent so much time and crawled to the fire. Kindly, someone passed a rough wooden bowl of stew into my quivering hands. Doltàn sat down beside me. I felt his arm wrap around my waist and lowered my head to his shoulder. He felt strong and smelled like fresh grass, horses, wood smoke, and oiled canvas. At some point, I must've fallen asleep, overcome by grief.

"Mizelda?" Louder this time, "Mizelda? Wake up." Doltàn was gently caressing my cheek when my emerald eyes flitted open. "We're going to bury your mamma."

"Doltàn, she made me promise."

"Promise?"

"To live with my papa."

"Oh." He turned his face aside. *Were there tears in his eyes?* "Just remember I'll love you forever and always." I didn't see his face again for a long time.

After the funeral, the elders did not stop me from fulfilling my promise. "You have a place among us forever and always," they assured me. The next morning, I left with Mirval. Doltàn had gone into the forest and hadn't returned, not even to say goodbye.

Mirval left me in front of an ornate house, three days' journey away from what had been my home for the past fifteen years. Hands shaking, I made a tight fist and knocked with what little force I could muster. A maid wearing white and black opened the door a crack. Before it slammed, I shoved my hand into the gap, releasing a hiss of pain through clenched teeth. "I'm here to see my father." I thrust the door open. "Please?"

"You're the awful gypsy half-breed?"

"Don't you dare!" My temper flared. "Where's—"

Just then a tall, handsome stranger appeared, summoned by our shouting. I only recognized his stormy green eyes. "Papa?" the unfamiliar word felt strange on my lips.

Dismissing the maid, he led me to a luxurious bedroom, where I was brought a tray of rich, heavy food. After two bites my stomach was churning; home and its simple comforts seemed far away. Ever since I'd left home, people had stared. I felt lonely and unwanted, a disease.

Days, weeks, months passed. One might think I became accustomed to my father's life: expensive food, fancy silk gowns, feather pillows. In reality, these things alone may have been tolerable. Perhaps I could even have endured the labels I received: "impure," "mutt," "monster," etc. The biggest problem of all was I lost something I'd always cherished: my freedom. Each day wore on me, making me sicker. I was a shell, a ghost of my once vibrant self.

Gradually, Papa noticed, "Mizelda, are you happy here?" Promise not forgotten, I merely shrugged. "Child, if you want to go home, I'll let you."

"I . . . promised." Sobs rose up, "She said—"

“Go home.” Planting a kiss on the top of my head, he sighed wistfully. “One day I’ll join you; I promise. Your mother will prefer my promise.”

“Will?”

“Oh yes, she’s watching from heaven. She will watch you forever and always.”

Barely hearing, I ran, feet flying along cobblestones, wind coursing through my veins.
Freedom—I will have it forever and always.

by Maddison Conway (14 years)

Courtenay, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Death Serum

“Get down,” I say, pushing my agent-in-training Xavier to the ground. “Turn on the voice detector and don’t say a word. I’m recording.”

His emerald-green eyes light up as I’m setting up the audio tracker. “Wait, are we going undercover right now—?”

I press my index finger firmly to my lips while glaring at Xavier, indicating him to stay silent. He nods his head excitedly. Crouching, I motion towards the opaque window above me, where I can scarcely make out two figures, a man and a woman, standing over a chemistry set. Painted above the door next to it in jet black is B-147, one of the many labs the scientists at S.S.R.I. (Secret Scientific Research Institution) use to work on their experiments. Cautiously, I slide the pebble-sized voice detector under the door.

“How long have you been working on this?” I hear a masculine voice say through my audio tracker.

“My team and I have been working on this death serum for quite a while. To be precise, it has taken us six years to achieve this result. What are your thoughts, Chief Kent?” a woman responds, in a voice in which I know belongs to Doctor Martina Williams, the head scientist at S.S.R.I. “Will this serum fulfill The Council’s needs?”

“I can honestly say I am quite surprised, and I expect The Council will be too. Never had I thought technology would get this far. Remind me again, how many doses are required for full effect?”

“With a syringe, one will suffice. We’ve designed the serum to completely stop the heart from functioning as well as shut down the mind. In consequence, a heavy dose, such as three injections, won’t allow the body to stay in a coma, and thus, it will stop breathing in a matter of minutes.”

“I must say this is all very impressive, Dr. Martina. And I must ask, how would you use this serum if you had to get rid of, say . . . an army? The Rebellions, for example?”

“Without any other equipment such as syringes, simply breathing in the serum secondhandedly can put someone into eternal sleep. It’s extremely contagious, so it will spread like wildfire, and therefore, can kill half the inhabitants. If that isn’t enough, the serum could be transformed into a gas and be leaked into their base. Everyone would be gone in under an hour. Just like that,” Dr. Martina says, snapping her fingers for effect.

“Extraordinary. . . ,” I hear Chief Kent say. “Just like that?”

“Yes,” replies Dr. Martina, and I picture her with an evil smile plastered on her face. “It goes into immediate effect when it is inhaled. With this serum, no one can resist it, not even The Rebellions, which means we have complete power over anyone.”

“The Council, you mean,” corrects Chief Kent.

Dr. Martina clears her throat. I imagine the smile she could have worn earlier fading now. “Ah . . . yes. With this new and improved serum, The Council has power over everyone. Even us scientists.”

I repeat that last sentence in my head: *The Council has power over everyone. Even us scientists.* If everything Martina has said is true, the world is done for good. My army of Rebellions won’t stand a chance against their serum and all will be lost.

Unless I get my hands on it first.

by *Madeika Vercella* (15 years)
Wainwright, Alberta



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Dragon

“There is a dragon in your boathouse,” the message said. I read it again, this time with my glasses on. I glanced back dubiously at my aunt’s outbuilding sitting along the water as if part of the scenery. Since Aunt Nell sold her boat, the boathouse remained unused.

I decided since Aunt Nell was out, I might as well take a quick look. Maybe I would catch the prankster who taped the note to the front door overnight. I marched across the sandy yard barefoot, kicking up white sand along the way. The boathouse was an ancient, wood, barn-like structure, the remains of several unfinished paint jobs scattered across in colourful sections of green, blue, yellow, and red. Lifting the rusty latch, I creaked open the door and peered inside.

Other than a workbench piled with art supplies, the building was empty. Part of the floor gave way to the ocean—that’s where Aunt Nell had kept her boat—and the wall behind it was open to the wind and waves.

I turned to leave when a bat sailed down in front of me and landed on the workbench. Except for one thing. It wasn’t a bat. It was a dragon, no bigger than a toaster.

“Hello,” I said. The dragon blinked his fiery orange eyes, wrapping his black wings back around his ocean-blue body. I held out my hand, not knowing what else to do. He crawled up my arm, claws digging into my skin, to perch on my shoulder. I carried him into the house, while he tried to bite my long, wavy blonde hair.

Apparently, dragons enjoy cheese. In fact, the dragon ate the whole plate of cheese. I talked to him, and he seemed to listen.

When we went back outside, he took off into the air, darting all over the place. Screeching resounded in the distance. “What was that?” I asked, but nobody was around to answer.

And then I heard Aunt Nell drive up. “Oh no. Er. . . , dragon, come here.” I sprinted for the boathouse, and, to my surprise, the dragon followed. We streaked in the door and slammed it shut. I smiled, and the dragon opened his mouth to reveal what may have been a smile. Then the screeches came back, unlike any bird native to the area. I had studied birds for a while, and this was . . . unusual. Maybe it was my weird neighbours with a new exotic pet.

Suddenly, the dragon released a high-pitched, identical scream. “More dragons,” I whispered in amazement. Sure enough, out of the mist soared a dozen more dragons in vivid colour, as if they were too bright to be here. The dragon looked at me calmly and then back at his group, that had flown in from the ocean entrance. If the neighbours had seen me, they would have been impressed. The dragons seemed to communicate with one another like many animals do, just by a look in the eye.

Out of all the creatures I’d ever seen, their eyes were the most intelligent. My dragon looked back at me with his flaming yellow eyes. We held each other’s gaze for a long moment. Then, they all flew off in a rainbow blur, up into the clouds. I was sure they would come back.

I tiptoed back into the house, hearing Aunt Nell ask where all the cheese had gone.

by Alyssa Canfield (13 years)
Carstairs, Alberta



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Night Wolf

The blazing hot fire crackles against the cold, whipping winds, which echo throughout the soundless night. Stone-grey owls hoot in the distance, their striking yellow eyes piercing the darkness like a silver sewing needle. I tuck my forest-green hood over my strawberry-red hair, shivering against the freezing breeze. My brother, John, tosses more chopped-up wood into the fire, which shoots up and becomes brighter and warmer. I start to relax as the heat seeps into my chilled bones, loosening all my tense muscles.

But it only lasts for a second before I hear a thundering crack in the forest behind me. I whip my head around and see a pair of bright yellow eyes staring at me with hunger. I shriek and whisper sharply, "John! I saw a pair of eyes in the forest!" I point my finger towards the eyes, but when I look again they are gone.

John chuckles and replies, "Calm down, Cassie. It's probably just an owl or something."

I nod in response. *It probably was an owl. I'm being absolutely ridiculous.* Even though I feel better I'm positioned to leap as far away from the forest as I can at any possible second.

A couple slow minutes later John stares at me and says, "Fine, if you're all worked up about this *creature* I'll go and check it out." He swiftly gets up and strides into the deep and frightening forest.

"Be careful," I mutter, but John can't hear me. I keep my eyes on his fierce red hair until it's lost in the distance.

I shake from the cold and fear as I wait for my brother to come back. He shouldn't be too much longer, but I can't get rid of this feeling in my gut. After getting restless, I stand up and tiptoe to the front of the woods.

Suddenly an ear-piercing scream that sounds distinctly male comes from the forest. "John!" I scream and fly into the forest, following the echoes of the scream. Spiky tree branches scrape across my legs and a gnarled tree root sends me spiralling towards the ground, but I just shoot up and keep sprinting. "John!" I yell again, "John!"

Another scream shatters my ear drums. It sounds close. I run to the right until I slip down a dirt hole that's about seven-feet deep. At the bottom lies my brother. He's ghostly pale and has cuts that gush flowing blood everywhere.

"John!" I whisper with a worried tone as I bend beside him. "What did this to you?"

His pale lips tremble and he whispers something like, "Wolf."

My hands twitch with fear as I pull off my hoodie and start shredding it. I wrap it tightly around the huge gashes on John's calf, thigh, and arm to stop any more blood from leaking. I also pick up a sharp stick for protection and I suddenly feel brave. *That wolf is not going to take my brother or me.*

After a lot of grunting and groaning I manage to haul John up. He mainly uses me for support as I guide him up the hole. It's not very steep, but when you are carrying someone heavier than you it feels impossible.

As we reach the top I hear a low growl behind us. I carefully turn around and see a massive grey wolf with bared fangs dripping white foam. Its claws are out and could cut me into multiple pieces easily. I gently set John down to lean against a sturdy tree stump and then I tighten my grip on my stick. The wolf suddenly pounces and I scurry away, almost cowering away in fear.

It swipes for me. I whack its paw with the stick, but that only makes it mad. I back up, but hit a tree. It has cornered me. My hands are slimy with sweat, but I keep a good grip on my weapon. The wolf comes in for the final attack and I brace myself for pain, a lot of dreadful pain, but then I think about what would happen to John.

A sudden rage bubbles inside me and I thrust the stick into the wolf's stomach. It whimpers and falls to the ground with a loud thud. Blood pours into a puddle around it and I almost gag from the stench.

I walk over to John, still very shocked, and say quietly, "Let's go home."

by Zoe Mathers (13 years)
Comox, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

When Robbie Moved In

My name's Ray. Before Robbie moved into the neighbourhood, I didn't have any friends at school. I was one of those kids who got bullied all the time, but not because we were nerds or anything. Every day, I would go to school, get to my locker, and put my stuff in. Mark's locker was right next to mine. Mark was the bully who always kicked me around like a soccer ball. It was very convenient for him. He would get to his locker every morning a little after I would. Then, he would pound me. After school, he would do something else, like stuff me in a garbage can or something.

Once, he shoved me into my locker. He locked it with my own lock. The lockers in my school aren't big, so I don't know how Mark managed to shove me into one. I didn't try to bang on the locker door, because I knew no one would open it for me. I had to wait until 10 p.m., which was when the janitor cleaned the school hallway. When the janitor finally let me out of the cramped locker, I almost crawled out the door. My mom had been so worried, but I couldn't tell her the truth for fear of the backlash. So Mark never got in trouble for it.

There were no kids on my street I would hang out with, nor would anyone ever be caught with me. Mark was always bossing me around and everyone knew I was a really big loser. But when Robbie moved in, everything changed. I didn't even know people were going to move into the Forester family's old house.

When Robbie's family moved in, Robbie walked right up to my front door, and knocked. Then he introduced himself to me. He had glasses too big for his face, and he had those really shiny braces on his teeth. He looked like he was in some dorky chess club, like the one at my school. I was really glad when he said he would be going to my school, since obviously, Mark would start picking on him instead of me. But it turned out, Robbie was different—way different.

When it was Robbie's first day of school, I decided, out of sympathy, I would show him around. I showed him the cafeteria and told him the food was horrible, so he might as well just bring his own lunch. I also took him to the gym. After I finished showing Robbie around, I told him I needed to put my backpack in my locker. He tagged along.

Mark was at his locker, waiting for me. "Well, well, well. What do we have on the menu today. . .," Mark guffawed. "For an appetizer, we have a nerd pie, with a little bit of Parmesan for flavour. For the main course, spaghetti with meatballs made of Ray. Who wants to go first?" "No one."

I looked around. I hadn't said that, and I assumed Robbie hadn't either. He was so skinny and looked like a tapeworm. But there was no one else in the hallway except for the three of us. Everyone else had gone off to their classes.

"We're not going to be thrown around by someone weak like you," the sedate voice shot out some daring words again.

Mark was staring open-mouthed at us. I looked around again and saw it actually had been Robbie speaking. Then, Robbie walked away from Mark. I followed him. I didn't even bother to put my backpack in my locker.

"Why'd you call him weak?" I asked Robbie.

"Because he has to make us feel bad just so he can feel good. But that just means he's weak and he feels like he needs other people to feel bad about themselves in order to feel strong," Robbie told me. I nodded. "No one deserves to be hurt, inside or out," Robbie said.

I was silent. Then I realized we were late for class. I tugged his sleeve and told him we needed to get going.

Robbie shrugged, "It's okay. Relax. You've never skipped school before?"

I gazed at him. I had thought Robbie would be the type of guy who loves school. But I realized I had figured Robbie all wrong.

by Margaret Yao (12 years)
Windsor, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Underground City

“Let’s get to work!” It was Thomas Green’s first day working for the government. He was sorting files and sending letters to councils. “Okay, here’s what you do,” Mr. Leman explained. “You check the top of each file, and depending on the number on the top of the page, you put it in separate piles. Then we’ll store them in the basement.”

Thomas nodded. He picked up a file, but there was no number, just something that read, “Daily Review.” Thomas read aloud, “City 28: Getting hotter, but the city will manage.” Thomas thought for a moment, “*Getting hotter but the city will manage?*” *What’s that supposed to mean?*

There was a knock on the door. “Hey, who’s in there?” hollered a booming voice.

“Uh,” Thomas stuttered, “T-Thomas . . . Green.”

A large man opened the door, “Uh, I think you have a file that was placed incorrectly,” he said nervously.

“Oh, I think I have it right here,” Thomas said, quickly handing over the file. The man snatched the file out of Thomas’s hands and ran out of the room. “*The city will manage,*” Thomas thought to himself. *It’s probably just a fluke.* But Thomas just couldn’t get that file out of his head.

“Hey, Thomas!” hollered Thomas’s best friend, James. “How was your first day at work?”

Thomas looked at James. “Good, I guess,” Thomas grumbled.

“I guess?” James said, amazed. “Really? You work for the government, and it’s ‘I guess?’”

Thomas shrugged. “I’ve got to get home. Goodbye.”

As Thomas walked home he kept wondering why everyone stayed underground. Well, he knew why: because the sun got closer and closer to the Earth until it broke through the sound barrier and everything started to burn, so everyone had to go into hiding. But one genius thought of the underground city that is now known as the government. *But that’s not possible,* Thomas realized. *The sun would have burned us to death by now, so that can’t be the reason why we’re down here.* Finally Thomas reached home.

It was Thomas Green’s second day of work, and he wasn’t feeling as confident as before. Then Mr. Leman walked in. “Hey, Thomas,” Mr. Leman said nervously, “the boss wants to see you.”

Thomas got scared. Was he already in trouble on the second day of work? Mr. Leman led Thomas down a hallway to a black door that read, “Government.” Thomas opened the door and saw a man in about his forties with a black suit and dark sunglasses. “Thomas Green.” The man sneered. “You know why I sent for you?”

“N-no,” Thomas stuttered.

“That file you read yesterday . . . might have given you some ideas.”

“No,” Thomas responded.

“Oh!” shouted the man. “You’re skating on thin ice. I know you saw the file, so don’t play games with me.”

Thomas looked at the man for a while and said, “You called me here because you know that I know you’re hiding something.”

“Well,” said the man, “that’s almost right. I called you in here, but I’m not hiding anything. Everyone knows that I made this city to keep us from dying.”

“The sun is not burning us,” started Thomas. “The sun couldn’t be burning us because if it were, this planet would be nothing but a ball of fire. You’re afraid of telling everyone that the sun isn’t burning us—something else is, and you have something to do with it,” Thomas replied.

The man looked at Thomas and then started to stand. “Get the guards,” the man said into a speaker on the wall. Then two men came in and led Thomas to a clear door.

“This, Thomas,” exclaimed the man, grinning, “is my success! I invented a ray and put it up in the sky, making it burn so hot that everyone had to go into hiding. That’s when I got the great idea of the underground city. It was perfect! But, now you know too much. I can’t have you going around telling people there’s a ray in the sky. I’m going to let you see the greatest invention in the world from the outside.” The guards pushed Thomas out of the clear door.

Thomas fell through, landing on the burning ground. The heat was so hot Thomas felt like his skin was sliding off his body. Thomas turned around and there was a sign with big black letters. It read, “The Underground City.” Those words were the last things Thomas Green saw.

by Ashanti Christian (12 years)
Windsor, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Waking World

I yawned and stretched, wanting desperately to go back to sleep. Morning had never been my favourite time of day as it meant parting with my beloved dreams. I grudgingly opened my eyes to see something that made me think I'd been pranked again.

Surrounding me like air was the great night sky, stars dotted about like splattered paint on a pitch-black canvas, glinting a brilliant silver. My bed was nowhere to be seen.

Am I dreaming? That was the first thing that ran through my anxious mind. I hesitantly stood and pinched myself. Against the cliché, I felt nothing. I was dreaming.

Looking around from where I was, my inquisitive gaze landed on only night sky—space. But I could feel there was something more.

Rather than panicking, I sat down to think. And with the blink of my eyes, the setting changed a good deal.

The building I now stood in front of was extremely tall, and gave me an unsettled feeling. It curiously reminded me of my mum's work, with its pristine stone build.

Despite there being several people around me, all casually walking on nothingness, I didn't dare speak to them. I felt it could somehow upset the dream pattern—break it, even.

Suddenly, someone spoke: “. . . left me to look for the girl. . . .” Big, burly, and in uniform, he was no doubt a grumbling security guard. He unusually enough wore headphones, and pop music in a foreign language faded in and out as he adjusted the volume. “The Supreme Overlordess of the Universe ran off! Again! She thinks she can get away with only searching in the night, when the little brat's already hid, sleeping somewhere!”

My thoughts were jumbled: *Who was The Overlordess, and who was her difficult daughter? Why were searches only conducted at night? Was overlordess even a proper word? What was my subconscious mind concocting for me?*

“You!” the guard shouted, startling me. “Maggot! You're coming with me!” Just as he swung his arm out to snatch me, I blinked two times fast, and was now somewhere else.

An office just like my mum's was now the setting. I currently faced the window, dismayed to see only space.

Turning around, I saw the desk Mum always sat at. Turning she was, of course, in her chair, a large grin adorning her features.

“M-Mum?” I stuttered. No. I wasn't talking to her. She wasn't really my mother, her ocean-blue eyes were glinting red.

“Hello,” she greeted me in a voice exactly like my mum's. “You found your way here.”

I defied my previous choice. “Are you. . . ,” I began, “The Supreme Overlordess of the Universe?”

The lady, who I wasn't sure was my mother or not, thought only a moment before responding, “No. Not to you, at least. And not to the waking world either.”

Just as she got up to leave, I stopped her. “W-wait! Who are you. . . ? Really. . . ?”

“Blink three times and you'll see . . . I'll be making eggs downstairs.” With that, she was gone.

I quickly blinked three times, and on the last blink kept my eyes shut tight. I could already feel myself wavering between the dream and real life.

Suddenly, I awoke. For real, this time. I hopped out of bed and pinched myself the hardest I could. Bad idea. It hurt a lot, but I was thankful as I looked out my window to see the waking world.

I smiled. It was wonderful! Wonderful to be awake and in a place where it was day!

Just then, I smelled eggs, and remembered what The Overlordess had said. I raced downstairs immediately and saw my mum, cooking eggs. My arms wrapped around her automatically. “You're . . . not The Overlordess, are you?” I questioned hopefully.

Mum chuckled, not trying to hide the red glint in her eyes. “No. . . ,” she answered, her words dragging on. “Not to you, at least. And not to the waking world either. . . .”

by Rachel Brown (11 years)
Ritchie, New Brunswick



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Dog Humans

August sixth: The neighbour's dog just went missing, or at least I think the posters are written by Mr. and Mrs. Kennel—a very good couple, no children. They used to cut my lawn for me last year, but Mr. Kennel broke his leg a month ago, so he can't now. I feel very sorry for them, because they do have bad fortune, mostly due to clumsiness. They both have hands that look somewhat like paws, which are not very . . . uh . . . useful. Also, they're very short and have brown furry hair.

Last year they were cutting down a blighted tree in their yard and it fell right on their porch. After they fixed it, their house caught on fire and Mrs. Kennel nearly lost her life in it. She was running and then, according to the police, the fringe of her dress caught on fire. After the couple recovered, Mr. Kennel was assembling a swing set when he, according to the hospital, saw a squirrel and afraid, ran away breaking a leg. Found unconscious in his yard, the ambulance took him to the hospital.

Anyway, the good news is, I finally got that diamond I ordered.

August seventh: A little while ago I got into a fight with the Kennels. They accused me of stealing their dog. What would I do that for? I don't need annoying dogs breaking expensive and rare pieces, while littering everywhere. I didn't know what they were thinking when they accused me, but I am an honest man, and I would never steal or kill. Anyway, I'm not mad at them; I understand they are still grieving over the loss of their beloved dog.

They got a new wheelchair, and yesterday I saw Mr. Kennel being pushed in it. It was an exquisite bluish-purple one with golden wheels and glittering handles. In fact, I once owned one just like it. I lost it last year, though. Funny thing is the Kennels were laughing and saying something like "Our darling will be eating him," or "Our darling will be leaping him," or "Our darling will be squealing him" to themselves afterwards.

August ninth: I found a dog today and brought it to the Kennels. They didn't accept the dog; they said it wasn't theirs. I've just decided it will stay with me. Nic, the dog, behaves very well indeed. He follows me around, even as I write this, as if he depends on me. The only thing eerie about him is he looks somewhat . . . human. He has short fur, with little ears, an insanely short tail, furry "hair" on top of his head, and very flexible paws.

I once caught him standing and trying to walk on two legs. I tried to build him a kennel, but he didn't want it. Instead, he wanted a room. Whatever, he is good company for a lonely man like myself, living inside my rich little castle.

August eleventh: Today is one of our town's traditional holidays. People put out signs reading, "Stealing, killing, fighting not permitted." The Kennels didn't put any signs out this year . . . probably too busy trying to find their dog.

August thirteenth: Nic is exhibiting strange behaviour these days. When I have my back turned, he reaches for something nearby. I let him have a gold pen of mine, and this morning I found a note in Nic's room reading, "S." Can you believe it? He's learned to write! For a treat, I bought him a collar studded with jewels.

August sixteenth: I have just built a new kennel for Nic. He has been annoying these days, and I don't allow him to stay in the house anymore. He's whining now; I must go see what's going on.

He has broken his glass bowl! I will have to go to that little reading room in my secret place under the house to calm myself for a moment. I have shown that place to no one but Nic. It's where I keep this journal too. Nic is amusing himself by making clacking noises on the ground

with a piece of sharp glass. I will bring him one last time into the house with me; how sad, both for Nic and myself. He had been great company to me these past days.

He is standing on two legs! He is walking! He's holding the piece of glass! Oh how clever! My, he looks almost human. Why, he is human—

August seventeenth: Woof. Steal.

by Vivian Xie (10 years)

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Chase

It seemed as if I had been here for hours but I knew it had only been minutes. I'd been waiting for it to come, to prove it was real. My hands were shaking, gripping the camera as if for dear life. I thought, *I can't go back, not after what I said. No, I won't go back until it's proven, until I can show them the truth.*

I heard an eerie creak from behind me. I turned around slowly, my hands shaking, and then I saw it. *The beast!* I tried to raise my hands, take a picture, prove my sanity, but my hands wouldn't move.

It disappeared and I felt a stabbing in my leg. I looked down to see blood dripping from my leg. *Run for it, I thought. It won't follow you out of the house.*

I was wrong. I ran to my little village, fearful of when I'd run out of breath. I cowered in a corner, but then I heard something: "Ann!"

The beast looked and ran off.

"Oh, Ann, where were you and what are you doing, sitting in the mud? Come on, if Mordred finds you've been out of the orphanage you're in deep trouble."

"Th-the beast was there! D-don't you s-see its footprints?"

Livly shook her head. "Ann, you're taking this too far. Just say it's fake, no one will judge you."

"But look! It scratched my leg!"

"Oh, Ann, are you okay? You shouldn't play by the barbed wire!" I looked back and the footprints weren't there.

"I really saw it this time! You have to believe me!"

Livly looked at me and then said, "They were right, you are insane."

I felt like I had just been punched in the guts and when Livly saw the look on my face she realized what she'd said. "Ann, I didn't mean . . . I'm sorry. Wait! Ann, come back!"

But I had already taken off. I ran to my secret stash for when I would run away. I took everything except the black and white photo of Livly and me. *I'll take a train to Canada, I thought. Someone there will like me.*

I boarded a train to Montana and saw Livly running to catch up. When she saw me on the train she stopped and fell to her knees, crying, looking at the photo.

I felt a welling guilt in my chest, but I pulled my head away, trying to forget about her and hoping there wouldn't be any beasts in Canada.

by Gwen Whittaker (10 years)
Barrhead, Alberta



HONOURABLE MENTION

Sillysaurus and the Logger

One day there was a dinosaur. His name was Sillysaurus. He lived in the hot desert with his family.

Sillysaurus was being silly and he got stuck between two trees. Sillysaurus was calling for help. He heard a logger cutting down the trees. Sillysaurus asked the logger if he could cut down the branches.

The logger decided to help Sillysaurus. Soon he cut down the two branches and Sillysaurus was free. Woo hoo! He said goodbye to the logger and then went home.

by Dylan Shui (5 years)
Vancouver, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Biggest Octopus . . . Ever!

Once upon a time there was a beautiful underwater paradise . . . and in a big cave was a big giant octopus. No one dared to go near it. Everyone judged the octopus by its size. Some fish even told others fake stories and said they were true!

One day all the fish decided to lure it into a trap and give him a piece of their mind.

When the octopus found out, he was worried!

The fish bravely approached the dull and weary cave. But as the fish came closer to the cave . . . they saw a very cheerful . . . octopus?

The fish were surprised to see the octopus so cheery! After that they laughed at their own misunderstanding. They became friends forever!

by Emma Erhardt (7 years)

New Glasgow, Nova Scotia

