

FIRST PRIZE

Fire Night

The shouts of the monsters fill my ears as I look into my mother's green eyes—the same green eyes she gave to me. The fire from outside flickers on the walls of our little house, casting ominous shadows and fractures of light.

"I'm scared, Mama," I whisper, my voice wavering as she holds me tight.

"Fear isn't your enemy, darling," she tells me. "You can use it to make you strong. Denying fear is not the answer. Everyone is afraid sometimes. It's what you do with your fear that counts. You can let it swallow you or you can embrace it. I need you to embrace it now. Don't let it take over you."

I nod my head, not really knowing what she means.

A shout at the door makes her head snap up. "Run!" she tells me, panic in her eyes making me hesitate. "Get as far as you can from here."

"No, I won't leave you!" I scream, tears rolling down my cheeks. "I won't let them have you!"

"It's okay, baby, but you have to go," she says, pushing me towards the back door. "Go."

My eyes are blurred as I look back at her. She stands at the door, the only thing between her and the monsters outside. "I love you," I whisper. I don't even know if she heard my last words to her. I push open the door and run out of the house. I am sobbing and stumbling through the night, but I keep going. Her shouts of defiance are enough to keep my feet moving.

She never got out of that house.

I keep walking until dawn. I cannot help but wonder why the sun still rises if my beautiful, loving mother isn't alive to see it. My legs give out beneath me, and I just lie there, curled up on the ground, not caring if I live or die.

Then the monsters come and take me away.

I won't see the sun rise again.

by Myriam Duval (Grade Seven)

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FIRST PRIZE

One Thousand and Sixty-Four Times

He has thrown this punch thousands of times before, less than an inch under my right eye, a perfect amount of force to cause a wave of stinging pain that flows through my face. I fall to the ground, feeling my body melting into the gravel. Motionless on my back, I feel the pain from my face move slowly through my body. Each breath I take is cold and piercing in my chest. My tears trickle down my cheek and slip off the side of my face. My arms and legs feel as if they are weighted to the ground. I lie there, staring up at this never-ending band of deep blue. I feel each heartbeat in my chest pound against my ribs as if it were trying to escape. My thoughts race around my mind like race cars, each one's engine loud and booming.

After what feels like a year, I start to become more aware of my surroundings; voices around me start to become clearer. I hear the boy talking to his friend as they chuckle along with him.

I take five deep breaths. One, I breathe in, filling my lungs with the cold air and exhale. Two, another deep breath, thinking about what I am going to do once I get up. Three, I feel my body start to loosen and start to move. Four, my body is in a sitting position, my eyes look at the boy and his friends. Then, five, as I take this breath, I stand up and look the boy straight in his eyes then turn around and walk away. I know there isn't much I can do, so I continue to walk, and all I can hear, is the boy's devilish laugh through the cacophony of his friends' guffaws.

One thousand and sixty-four. That is how many times I have been punched by that boy.

One thousand and sixty-four times, I have gone home with this purple stain on my face.

One thousand and sixty-four times, I have melted into that gravel, while feeling my body fill with pain.

One thousand and sixty-four times, I have had to count to five before I have walked away from the boy and his devilish laugh.

by Amélie Bournival (Grade Eight)

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SECOND PRIZE

Wasted

It was the third time this week he had been in trouble with the constables. Joseph and his friends Henry and Leroy ran across the streets of Erinsor from their pursuers. They took a sharp turn down an alleyway and jumped over the chain-link fence at the end before the constables could catch them. As he and his friends fled the town, Joseph heard a voice yell in the distance: “Darn it!”

The three sprinted towards the shipwreck on the horizon of the salt flats that surrounded the town. Memories started flooding back to Joseph, memories of watching the sun set into the ocean as it swallowed it up. He remembered how beautiful the world was. He tried to push the memory away as he entered the rebel camp that was hidden inside the shipwreck.

As he walked into the camp, he saw shabby huts made of metal scraps and wooden boards. People around his age, sixteen, were walking around carrying supplies.

“What have ya got?” one asked.

“Just some water,” Leroy replied. They were low on supplies, so the rebels raided the supply office every week for materials.

“We can’t keep doing this!” Henry warned.

“Don’t worry,” Joseph said. “After tonight, we won’t have to.”

It was late at night when Joseph heard a voice on his microphone say, “The bombs are planted!”

Joseph’s plan was to destroy the citadel where the supply office was. If they did this right, it wouldn’t be blown up. Joseph started to sneak towards the entrance, signalling Henry and his squad to distract the constables by storming the citadel.

“Leroy, shut down the defences,” Joseph said over the microphone.

“Affirmative!” replied Leroy.

It wasn’t long before the wailing sound of sirens pierced the night sky, quickly shutting down seconds after. Leroy had succeeded. The door had unlocked, allowing Joseph to enter. Getting to the control room to detonate the bombs would be easy. The door to the control room opened in front of him, just before something hit him on the head. Joseph cried in pain as the world turned black around him.

As Joseph awoke, he heard a voice say, “Rise and shine. . . .”

A guard stood in front of him, holding a strange metallic weapon. “You’ve been nothing but trouble,” the guard spoke slowly. “Now I’m going to make sure you never come back.” Electricity crackled from the end of the weapon.

Before the guard could shoot, someone punched him. It was Henry.

Joseph activated the bombs, running as the guard kept repeating one sentence, “I hate you!”

Joseph and Henry escaped the blast. The constables were stopped. The people were free. It was finally over. They had won.

by Jordan Funk (Grade Seven)
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SECOND PRIZE

Earth Ghost

I sat on my windowsill and gazed into the dark abyss of the sky. A few stars twinkled like fireflies, and they shone like pearls. The beautiful sight was nothing short of stunning. Looking down from my apartment window, I saw arrays of small houses. The only sounds that could be heard were my soft breathing and the whistling wind. I patiently waited for my mother to get home from work. She worked for the National Space Research Agency; however, she had never travelled to space as she only specialized in building spacecraft.

When I grow up, I'm going to become an astronaut, I thought, before noticing a small and bright light appear above the sea of clouds. The shooting star lit the sky as it whizzed past my window.

I closed my eyes. *I wish I could travel beyond the atmosphere of our Earth.*

Suddenly, I heard the sound of the front door swing open. "Alice!" my mother cried. I ran to the front door to see her panting. "We need to go. Now."

"Why? What happened?" I asked as I drew my brows in confusion. I had never seen my mother so tense before.

"No time for questions! Come!" She clutched my arm and sprinted out the door. I ran after her; terror and confusion gripped me. *What is going on?* We exited the building, still running. Mighty gusts of wind hit me. I looked up, following my mother, to see that the white star I had wished upon was now a hundred times larger and on its way to collide with the Earth. Hundreds of people ran towards the tall white rocket ship, their deafening voices heard above the loud engine of the vehicle.

We pushed ourselves into the crowded space, hurried to put on suits handed to us, and grabbed our seats before the spacecraft took off. The ship began to rattle and shudder. The deep sound of a motor filled my ears. Out the window, I saw the smoke of ignited boosters, and we were hurled into the sky. Suddenly, the ship began to shake violently, and the whole vehicle vibrated. A heavy weight pushed at my chest and face, silencing my screams. We were hit with an abrupt stillness and silence. Everyone began to float, and through the windows, I saw a beautiful blue sphere. The sight was breathtaking. I couldn't pull my eyes away from it.

The asteroid met the Earth. The explosion below us started a malicious scarlet fire that ate away possibly the most amazing celestial body in the universe.

I wished my home goodbye as it diminished in front of my eyes.

by Rhea Phillips (Grade Eight)

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THIRD PRIZE

Hope

It was one beautiful winter day; snowflakes glistened in the sky as Eva walked Sparky out to the paddock. She could sense her horse's hot breath on her neck as she sighed. She was a fifteen-year-old orphan, whose parents had passed by drowning when she was five. She lived in a tiny village in the north of her country and had never been anywhere else except for Snow Stables, where she grew up. Eva lived a lonely life with her Aunt Maya—no friends, no visitors; only horses to keep her company. She was an excellent horseback rider, and her only friend was Sparky, her five-year-old Friesian mare.

“Come on, Sparky!” Eva teased, tacking her up and getting ready for a trail ride in the woods. Sparky reared, agreeing. She clicked her tongue, and then Sparky began trotting on the path into the woods. She breathed in the scent of fresh leaves, but this time, something was different. She really felt lonely. She normally didn't care. Closing her eyes, she breathed in, with tears rolling down her cheeks as she wiped them away with her sleeve. Sparky neighed, gently touching her hand with her muzzle. *At least I have you, Sparky*, she thought.

Suddenly, Sparky bucked and ran behind a tree trunk, throwing Eva off into the dirt.

“Ouch! Sparky, come back!” she yelled.

Sparky neighed towards a bush that was wiggling. Eva noticed it, too, and gently crept towards the bush.

As she got closer, she heard, “Ow!” And suddenly, she saw a girl her age with a horse! This was weird.

Sparky immediately fell in love with the girl's colt. The girls introduced themselves, and she learned that the girl was a fifteen-year-old traveller named Fiona. On the way home, they talked and laughed, sharing their life stories. Eva felt so warm inside. Finally, she had someone to actually talk with who actually understood her—after all these years. They led their horses to empty stalls, then she showed her new friend her small and homey room. They talked some more about horseback riding until their eyelids drooped, and they fell asleep, Eva feeling better than she ever had.

The next morning, Eva woke up, stretched, and yawned. Turning over on her bed, she slowly opened an eye, but to her surprise, Fiona wasn't there. All of her things were gone, not a trace, and the bed wasn't made either. Her heart sank so low she felt as if she were about to disintegrate. She fell onto her knees as heavy tears slipped down her cheeks. There was no hope anymore.

by Shannon Chen (Grade Seven)

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THIRD PRIZE

Change

Tim and his little brother, James, were playing with their toys when the phone suddenly rang. With curiosity, they both ran to the living room to eavesdrop on their dad.

“Uh-huh. . . . Okay. . . . Yes. . . . No. . . . Two. . . . Thank you,” they heard Mike, their father, speak into the phone before Susan, their mother, quickly grabbed both of them and led them to their room.

“It’s not nice to eavesdrop on a conversation, boys,” Susan scolded. “I think it is best that you two stay in here for a while.”

“Yes, Mom,” replied the boys.

Susan walked downstairs to check on Mike, who explained to her the situation of the paperwork.

“It’s complicated. See, you have to sign the financial documents, legal documents, the parenting plan, the agreements, and . . . ,” Mike ranted.

“It’s okay, Mike, think about the kids. How will we break the news to them? How will they react?” asked Susan.

“I-I don’t know yet,” Mike stammered. “We have to finish the paperwork before its official. It’s getting late. Get the boys to bed, and we’ll talk about this tomorrow morning, all right?”

Hesitantly, Susan agreed and went to put the boys to bed. She decided to stop worrying about it and, like Mike said, discuss it tomorrow morning.

“How many more days?” asked Susan while eating her breakfast.

“One,” replied Mike, who had finished the paperwork.

“Okay, I’ll take the children to school and then get the papers notarized,” stated Susan.

Tim, who was over in the other room, had overheard his parents talking. He was getting more suspicious and wanted answers, but he couldn’t just ask questions, because his parents wouldn’t tell him the truth. Tim got ready for school, and being the smart lad that he is, he asked the big question. “Mom, what is all the paperwork for?” he questioned.

His mom smiled and answered, “I’m not going to lie, Tim, but a change is coming.” Tim, confused, didn’t know what this change was. Throughout the whole school day, Tim was thinking of all the possibilities and just couldn’t put a finger on one. He was tired of thinking, and after school, he eavesdropped on his parents.

“I’ve made it official, Mike, I have one week, and you have one week.”

“That’s great, but how will we break it to the kids?” asked Mike.

“Oh, I don’t know, Mike, it’s hard to explain to kids about what a divorce is,” said Susan.

Tim, who overheard everything, couldn’t believe his ears. Did he hear what he thought he had just heard? His parents were getting a divorce! He didn’t know what to do. He knew a change was coming; he had never expected it would be so serious.

by Anderson Lo (Grade Eight)
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