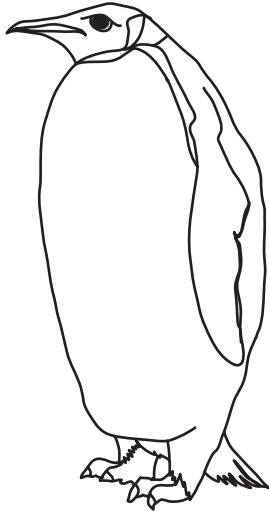


THE POEMS



FIRST PRIZE

I Don't Miss You

I don't miss you,
Although you enter my mind almost every single day.
While it broke my heart to see you go,
I just wanted you to be okay.

I don't miss the white sterile rooms.
I don't miss the circular, prison-like floor,
Filled with those piercing cries of anguish and desperation,
Louder and louder every night from the woman next door.

I mourned your laughter, your smile, your twinkling eyes.
I longed for your voice, like melting honey, saying my name
Each day in the years before you disappeared
When with each visit, I realized that you'd never be the same.

I don't miss your hugs, your kisses, your stories;
For if I close my eyes, I can feel your warm embrace against my skin.
No, I don't miss what you were
But rather what we could have been.

Here I stand, in front of a mirror: alone.
But in my reflection, I see your eyes, your laugh, your smile.
If only I knew what was behind these features,
Had you stayed healthy a little while.

The memories we shared are too tiny for my long fingers to grasp.
I have to shrink to reach them, for in each moment we shared, I was only a little girl.
And I long for even a drop of your wisdom now;
I would trade everything for it, I'd treasure it more than any pearl.

Every day, I discover a piece of myself that I'm told is identical to a piece of you—
The you I never got to know.
I am lost. I need help to find who I am,
For you were too unwell to tell me before you had to go.

Just yesterday, I read a book by my favourite author.
Then, Auntie told me you, too, liked her best.
I went to a store filled with thousands of dolls,
But when I had no one to share our passion with, the loneliness struck deep in my chest.

I'm almost sixteen now: finally old enough to hear your other tales!—
To learn about love and loss and finding your way.
I want to hear what you would have said in that honeysuckle voice
Had you seen me come home broken today.

I don't want to go back in time to see you,
But I wish you could have come forward with me
A day, an hour, even a minute: for you to see who I've become;
A day, an hour, a minute: for me to glimpse who I could be.

No, I don't miss you—I can't.
I was grateful when your suffering came to an end,
But I hate that you missed seeing me become a young woman,
And I lost my chance at finding my best friend.

by Serena Habib (15 years)
Toronto, Ontario

SECOND PRIZE

Winter Slumber

The water still, unmoving, not a ripple to be seen.
A mirror in glass unfractured, unaltered, and pristine.
No rising waves or bubbles to suggest the life within,
Only calm, deep blue beneath a shell of swirling tin.

The ducks have all flown south, and the fish are all but lost,
The wildflowers are all hidden by layers of hardened frost.
The trees have snow-white blankets, and the skies are hazy grey,
And the crunching of my boots is the only sound today.

The sky is ever falling, laying quilts along the floor,
And the only mere infractions are the footprints along the shore,
Pawprints left by padded feet, from those devoid of slumber,
Who witness the beauty of a winter day, above the soil and lumber.

by Leah Symons (14 years)
Guelph, Ontario

THIRD PRIZE

The Whispers of the Ballpoint

I just want to write,
Pen to paper:
Want to feel the flow of the ballpoint gliding across the obscurity of the blank sheets,
Want to taste the toxicity of the tarry midnight ink as it skates from one letter to the next,
Want to witness the stories in my head being scrolled out across the pages,
Want to hear the hushed whispers of the ballpoint.

The keys under my fingers,
They mock me,
Challenge my every belief.
My callused mind wishes to be consoled by the kindred numbness of my hands
Yet feels the cold, impersonal buttons, so easily being repressed.
It tempts the quixotic laziness of the back button, the undo, the delete.

The mind is an ocean,
So powerful, endless, and majestic,
Home to so much enchanting life.
The pen . . . a fishing rod,
Taunting the opportunity to catch a treasured idea and release it to the world.
The paper . . . a boat,
Holding imagination in the confines of its safety.
The sandy beaches of reality awaiting its return, daring to hope for a fresh catch to discover.

The ancient trustworthiness and simplicity of the stick . . .
The thin, honesty of the paper, so see-through and bare . . .
Its pleading emptiness begging for the fulfilment of one's mind to be poured out into it . . .
The freedom of the silky ink, flowing across its surface like a bubbling stream of spring . . .

But behind all of the ink and sheets, we are here,
The humble authors, storytellers, and children of the Earth.
We use our tools for the retrieval of our creativity,
To share our words with others, to simply write.
We give a voice to emotion; a face to pain; a texture to happiness.
We know when to laugh and when to cry.
We know when to live and when to die.
But most of all, we know when to listen.

We listen for the guidance of our masterpieces.
We listen for the predestined movements of our hands.
We listen to hear the hushed whispers of the ballpoint.

by Brooke Scriven (14 years)
Canmore, Alberta

HONOURABLE MENTION

Terra

If I could sleep, for just one night,
I do not know if I would dream.

All I know is that the whirling pools wrapped
around my skin are starting to flood the green
that keeps my mind wandering,

drifting,

softly orbiting,
fondled by the crisp, velvety air,

like the moment your eyes waded through the deep end
and your vision honed to see
who it was that wallowed by your side,
for it was love that kept you floating.

If I could sleep, for just one night,
I would mellow down
my own existence until it
charred the wielding sparks within my
core but then were hushed, flourished with olive,
fortified by sweetness,
embellished with the pigment of benevolence.

But now, I wait, as my colours decline.
They make me look so ominous, though I am not angry.

If I could sleep for just one night, I would not have to
tell the wolves to cry out to my sister
who lives with her eyes closed—yet glances back
to me when the sky is enveloped by darkness.
She understands my desolation when she whispers that
she, too, suffers.

Pain? What pain?

I tell her she lives among the stars.

Happy?

She has no reason not to be.

I cannot help but seek injuries,
engrossed within my own aching pulse—one after the other.
Days to come, one by one until my end.

If I could sleep for just one night,
all I would ask of you
is to know what I would look like

if I were healed.

Then, once again, I would awaken
and ask why it must stay as it is:
just a dream.

I do not ask for much,
for I guess I am just a lonely speck in the universe.

But when my blue tears mute to grey,
and here I forfeit, destructed I must stay,
I will not accept your words:

“I’m sorry.”

by Shyree Mehta (15 years)
West Vancouver, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Car Crash

Glass flying
It isn't fair
Looking at your crimson-red hair
I'm yelling
He couldn't give a care
Uncontrolled turning
Big white bag of air
Tell me
Are you still there?

by Maggie Leung (15 years)
Richmond Hill, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Mining

Early miners sit by the riverbed, scooping wet soil into shallow metal pans—swirling, washing away sediment, panning for gold.

A rocker box, resembling a child's cradle, sways, sifts ore, separates gold from dirt. Water pours over gravel. Finer material drops through perforations of an iron plate. An apron distributes substances across riffle pieces of wood catching the precious metal.

Underground, horizontal tunnels are hollowed out for access.
Mine carts with unflanged wheels run on wooden plank rail tracks to move ore.
Vertical access shafts transport workers in a mine cage.
Wedged between crevice of jagged rocks, workers chip away with pickaxes and chisels.
Danger looms—premature explosions and misfires occur.
Black powder accidents and dust from dynamite blasting fill the acrid air.

Decades would pass before heavy iron machines and tools are used to excavate in mines.
Hydraulic cannons, with high-pressure jets of water, dislodge rock.
Stamping mills, lifted by cams on a horizontal shaft, crush ore.
Compressed air drills aid ventilation.

In the dark, damp, dingy environment of abandoned mines, mineral deposits form from water dripping and flowing from fractures.
Icicle-shaped stalactites cling close to the ceiling,
Pointy stalagmites stick near to the ground,
Echoing the emptiness of what once was thriving and bustling.

by Jonah Doupe (14 years)
Belwood, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Crooked Mirrors

I watch myself watch me
In a glass door in the city.
In that moment, I am plagued
By a deeper insecurity.

Invasive thoughts are born,
And they soon consume my mind:
*I'm not the type they're looking for,
I'm not really their kind.*

My brown skin's not fair,
Neither's my hair.
I feel different from the rest;
Perhaps not even trying
Would be for the best.

I close my eyes,
My breathing quickens.
I sit locked,
I'm being mocked,
Prisoner of my own mind.

A moment passes,
Maybe two or three.
This moment in time,
Both fleeting and an infinity.

My eyes carefully open,
My panicked breathing starts to slow.
I take a step back to watch
All the others come and go.

And suddenly I'm struck
By a new realization:
*These people who walk by
Lead lives no different from mine.*

Some are fair, others are dark,
Each unique in their own light.
I'm looking out at a sea of individuals
Who are fighting their own fight,
Different yet the same as me.
The wheels start to turn,
A smile spreads across my face.
Diversity is precious,
Something we must all embrace.

But there will always be
People who search to create divide,

Initiate shame and humiliation
From where we must derive pride.

It comes down to this,
Because no matter how it's said,
Our sense of self is beautiful
And equal to all the rest.

by Anisha Rajaselvam (14 years)
Halifax, Nova Scotia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Ashen Peace

Empty hallways,
Roaming eyes,
This is a place of many lies.

Piano playing,
No one's there,
The portraits hung, all seem to stare.

Squeaking mouse,
Broken vase,
This place seems a haunted maze.

Creaking closet,
Knife on floor,
Drips of blood still stain the door.

Rotting floorboards,
Young remains,
Hung to torture, wrapped in chains.

Ruined clothes,
Jagged nails,
Skin so withered, cold and pale.

Consumed in darkness,
Acrid fear,
And when left, one fell—a tear.

Pleas ignored,
Backs turned,
And still, through all, no lessons learned.

Clocks tick,
Bells chime,
The deceased appeared untouched by time.

Decades passed,
A century,
Burned was her corpse, eventually.

Scattered ashes,
House aflame,
The doer of received? No blame.

Wrathful peace,
Vengeance none,
Her spirit rose, looked to the sun.

Mixed emotions,
Soaring heart,
Hurt only was a little part.

Silent tears,
Quiet laughter,
Haunted peace in lands hereafter.

by Sophia Yamamoto (13 years)
Chilliwack, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Nature's Call

My mind takes me far away,
To the salty sea breeze of the ocean,
To the turquoise sea foam spraying every which way,
To the white sands of a breathtaking beach,
To the playful sound of laughing children,
To the *caw, caw* of sea birds,
And then, suddenly, I hear
Foamy wave after wave, roaring,

Beckoning me,
Drawing me closer,
Whispering gently to my listening and eager ear,
"Come, come,"
But just as quickly, the voice departs

As I drink in the pleasant aroma of sweet flower fragrances,
And feel the tender touch of the blossoming buds,
And bask in that golden orb of light called the sun,
And hear the pleasant chirping of early birds,
And eat the fresh ripe berries,
And walk on freshly fallen pine leaves,
And then, suddenly, I hear
Delicate leaf after leaf, swishing,

Beckoning me,
Drawing me closer,
Whispering gently to my listening and eager ear,
"Come, come,"
But just as quickly, the voice departs

As the puffy clouds swirl around me,
Leaving me on a rocky mountain,
Leaving the trail beside me steep and narrow,
Leaving any creature that finds its way here,
Leaving them to climb it, explore its mysteries,
Leaving them to live and breathe the satisfying feel of freedom,
And then, suddenly, I hear
Blowing wind after wind, howling,

Beckoning me,
Drawing me closer,
Whispering gently to my listening and eager ear,
"Come, come,"
But just as quickly, the voice departs,

Leaving me standing,
Swaying gently to the tickling air,
Listening to its small fleeting voice,
As I slowly pry my eyes open,

While sinking slowly to the ground,
And lie peacefully and calmly under the shade of a massive oak tree,
And watch the sunset go down in an impressive display of beautiful colours.

by Julia Jurca (12 years)
Kitchener, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Fishing Is Cursed

Based on a true story.

I'm cursed.
I never get a fish no matter how hard I try.
The fish come to me and only me, but I never can get them up high.
I am the only person on the dock who has a moving reel.
The professionals ask me what type of bait I use.
People look at me, envying my luck with their beady eyes.
My rod, it's always knotted up with strings, and so is my head.
Fish break my string like a toothpick every time.
My hook is always "hooked" on me.
Prime time,
At the end of the day,
As the sun goes down,
No one except me has an empty frown.
Always one person there
Says a little verse:
"I'm sorry, sonny,
But I think *ya*
Cursed."

by Daniel Wan (11 years)
Burnaby, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Same Stuff

Sitting here, at my desk,
You would never ever guess
That you and me,
And everything in-between—
From the deep blue seas to the birds that are singing—
Have in common the same type of beginning: *atoms!*

Atoms such as hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon are building blocks for most matter,
Realizing this is such a wondrous flatter.
We are made from the same stuff,
It's absolutely no bluff!

Take a moment to appreciate the profound connection we all share.
Just a thought, if you dare.

by Gregory Albert Perri (9 years)
Toronto, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Doggy Life

I was born in this strange,
Weird-looking place.
I had no company,
And I had no space.

I got food and water
Every single day.
I also got a ball,
So I could play.

One day, I was let out
Of my small, small home.
A two-legged creature
Bought me to own.

He looked interesting,
And I gave his face a lick.
He happily gave me
A fine-looking stick.

Then, I was heading
To the world outside.
It was very large,
So long and wide!

The two-legged creature,
Who was called a man,
Led me towards an
Amazing, grassy land.

We played and we laughed
Under the sun.
For a very long time,
It was a lot of fun!

After an exhausting
And fast-paced game,
The clouds turned dark,
And it started to rain.

Soon, we were
Soaking, man and pet.
We hurried to a place
Where we wouldn't get wet.

The place was better than
The old pet store.
There was space, luxuries,
And much, much more.

The man gave me dog food
So delicious and sweet.
This is now my
Favourite treat!

The man named me Mustard,
I like that name.
I feel like a doggy
In the Hall of Fame!

by Andrew Yang (10 years)
Scarborough, Ontario

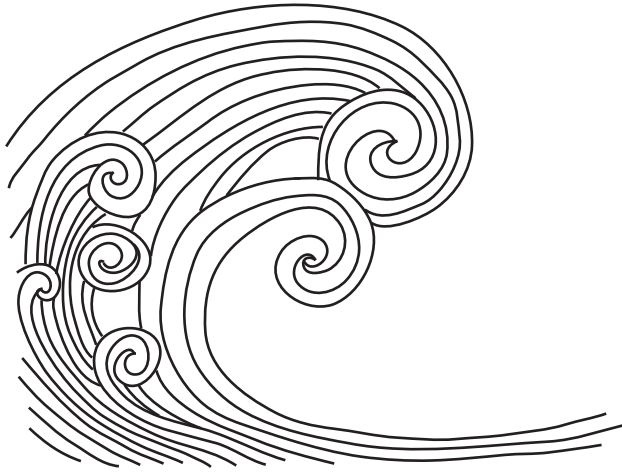
HONOURABLE MENTION

Rufus

Rufus died.
It was very sad.
But we have no idea
how he died.
He had cancer.
That's all we really know
about how he died.
And he died when he was eight years old.
If dogs had grade twos and threes and fours
just like people,
he would be in grade two.
I really liked him.
I liked how he acted.
He was also really nice.
Our neighbours were nice when he died.
Some gave us cards.
I wish Rufus survived.
He was a very healthy dog.
We have no idea how he got
the cancer though.
I would like if you would meet him.
He was a very good dog.
It's pretty sad that he died though.
He was also in a blanket of ice
when he was at the vet's
because he was really hot.
He was very, very hot.
This is not all of the things
about Rufus.

by Nathan MacNamara (7 years)
Dundas, Ontario

THE SHORT STORIES



FIRST PRIZE

The Tsunami

The earthquake hit without any warning. I remember the brilliant blue of the sky, laughter erupting from our mouths as we ran outside barefoot, soaking up the sun.

Suddenly, the earth jolted beneath us. We froze, eyes wide as the ground beneath us rumbled, thin cracks spreading as fast as lightning across the dirt road. Our voices stuck in our throats, the world paused as if it were a video.

The ground jolted again, and I lost my balance. Then, chaos broke out, people yelling in fear as the earth shook violently.

Trying to get up, I grasped for my little brother, who was frozen next to me.

“*Jishin! Ajishin* is here! Run!” came an urgent cry from behind us—our mother’s. I looked towards the sound of her voice and saw that she was struggling to get closer, buildings beginning to crumble around her. Long black hair flowing in her face, she shouted to us, “Hiroku, Anaki! I love you . . . but get out of here—*run!*”

“Mama!” Trembling, my little brother clung to me as the earth quaked and shouted to her, his big brown eyes filled with fear.

“Go! I’ll find you—I promise! Get to the shelter, you’ll be safe there!”

“No!” I sobbed as my mother grew harder to see. All of a sudden, the ground gave a loud groan, splitting open the dirt road in front of us—it was becoming more dangerous. In a desperate attempt, I cried out, “I can’t lose you!”

Across the crack, my mother cried, “You are my children, and I will love you forever . . . but, Hiroku, you must be brave. . . .”

She was right. Choking back another sob, I tried to wave goodbye, but she had already disappeared. Buildings collapsed around us; we were running out of time. Blinking the tears out of my eyes, I focused on sprinting away as the ground crumbled beneath us.

Out of nowhere, a stone wall to our left began to topple over. It was right over my brother. Without a second thought, I pushed him out of the way seconds before the wall fell. As it crashed down on me, a flaring pain shot up my leg, and instantly, I knew it was broken. I could barely move.

“Hiroku!” Anaki was shaking, scrambling to get to me. “Are you okay?” he cried, tears streaming down his face as he tried to free me, but the stones were too heavy.

I looked around at the cracks in the ground, travelling near us, and the houses around us that threatened to fall at any second. There was no way to get me out in time, and right then, I made a choice.

“Listen, Anaki,” I said, looking at his eyes. “You must lead your friends to the shelter. It’s the only way. A tsunami is coming; you won’t survive if you don’t go now!”

“But . . . I can’t just leave you. . . .” He sniffled, dirt streaks on his tear-stained face.

“You must get everyone to the shelter. I believe in you, *otōto*.”

Eyes searching mine, my little brother finally nodded, understanding written on his face. Amid the earthquake, hugging me tightly, he whispered, “I will, Hiroku.”

I met his gaze. “You’re so brave. Please know that I love you very much—” the words were stuck in my throat as I tried to hold in the tears, unable to show how much it hurt me to leave my brother. But it was the only way.

Anaki took in shuddering breaths, but before I could say any more, he shouted, “We have to get to the shelter before the tsunami!” Then, they ran away, my brother in the lead.

Was this the last time I would see him? Smiling sadly, I looked at my little brother with a newfound respect, my heart sinking. But before they disappeared into the dust, Anaki bowed to me, and with a lump in my throat, I bowed my head back.

I managed to haul myself out from the wall, yet the roar of a tsunami meant it was on its way. Meanwhile, I thought of my mother’s last words and, with my final strength, rolled onto my back. One final time, I looked up at the blue sky as a wall of black water rushed towards

me, swallowing everything in its path. With hope that my brother had survived, I whispered to myself, “Be strong, little lion.”

by Janie Zhang (14 years)
Vancouver, British Columbia

SECOND PRIZE

What We Will Remember

A dragonfly tittered across the water, riding a breeze that brushed through my knotted hair. The evening lowered slowly over the cabin, the sun dancing its way down the foggy windows. The water was covered with a smattering of faded orange blots, thanks to small, uneven waves sliding over the surface of the lake. It was a beautiful afternoon, fading away and filling the air with my resentment towards the passing of time.

Feeling a shiver roll up my spine, I rebelled by remaining still. I was desperately reassuring myself the warmth would last longer. It was nearing the end of summer, and school and responsibilities loomed like dark clouds.

Lying face-down on the sun-bleached dock, splinters of wood wedged their way into my knees. The sun tickled my skin; it was its own marvellous energy vibrating from above, rousing the ever-searching minds of astronomers. . . .

I quickly began to realize that there were vibrations coming from somewhere much closer. From the other side of the dock, I heard the patter of bare feet on loose wood. Who would disturb me?

“Wow, it’s amazing,” the voice of my little brother adjudicated in a low whisper. “It looks like a painting.” Levi admired the scenery. His walking stopped near my head, I did not look up. All I could see were his dirt-stained feet, painted with the essence of summertime.

I moaned, then began my response, “Tell me I don’t have to go inside yet.”

“No,” he said, “I just saw the colours through my curtains and wanted a better look.” Levi sat down, crossing his little legs around themselves.

I begged him not to disturb me.

“I won’t.”

I expected him to begin bugging me, nudging me, or talking just to stir up my temper. To my surprise, he remained mute. *Maybe he has grown*, I thought. What a strange idea, the small brother of mine achieving some maturity.

We sat in blessed silence. It felt like an eternity, but never in the way that is bad—like an eternity that is wanted, the desire to make time last; a rare thing in our lives.

Slicing through the melody of the churning lake, Levi spoke up in a small voice, uttering my name. I sensed that there was something extremely wrong.

Sitting up, I squinted at my suddenly much brighter surroundings. My little brother sat quite content, his face full of awe at the sunset.

The sky had become an explosion of technicolour blues, purples, pinks, and fluorescent oranges. Light seemed brighter than it ever had in mid-day, as the colours leapt around the lake alongside the dragonflies.

Levi spoke louder this time, “What will you remember?”

I frowned, concerned. “About this summer, or . . . ?”

“This summer.”

I was confused, but I responded after some thought, “Probably the waterskiing, or that hike we took to the top of the hill.” Chuckling dryly, I was bobbing my chin towards a nearby hill that we had exhausted ourselves hiking the previous day but had enjoyed the everlasting view.

Levi nodded. “I will remember this,” he said, gesturing towards the sky that was lit aflame.

The sunset was almost over now. There were remaining hopeful streaks of light that held to the clouds with extreme determination.

“Nothing else?”

“No. Because even if I do see the sunset again, it will not feel like it does now.” He turned towards me, staring me dead in the eyes. They still glimmered like the baby I had met nine years ago. “I will expect sunsets like this, and I will only be as surprised as the time after that.”

Then, we sat in deep, cavernous silence.

That moment, that little fragment of time, made me realize how much we had changed.

We drove home the next day, a winding trail through trees and brush. There was light music playing, but no one sang, even though we knew the song by heart. Our parents mumbled things from the front seats. Our car went over a bump, only everyone remained still. Levi and I had our heads resting against the cold, fingerprint-stained car windows. We sighed, watching our summer drive away.

I would never forget what Levi had said that day on the dock; though it would take much work to remember the details of our hiking trip or the momentary thrill of waterskiing.

by Eva Eusanio (15 years)
Nanaimo, British Columbia

THIRD PRIZE

Ripple

The afternoon sun shines intensely on the calm water. Her pond is surrounded by thick evergreens, stretching higher and higher, reaching for the nonexistent clouds. This barrier allows little wind to blow, intensifying the mind-numbing heat.

Sunita sits uncomfortably in her red canoe, gripping her fishing rod tightly to avoid it slipping from her sweaty grasp. She thinks to herself about how much she dislikes the fishing experience, comparing herself to a turkey slowly roasting in an oven. She remembers fondly of her childhood, coming here with her parents during the long summer days. Nothing's changed here, yet her feelings have. It's no longer pleasant or calming, as it once was. She sighs. This whole adventure was her idea—an attempt to get her son out of the house, and to give him the same, if not better, childhood as herself. Therefore, Sunita refuses to admit her mistake.

Chester, however, does not find joy in such a laborious task. To distract himself from his overwhelming boredom, he has resorted to playing on his tablet, which he convinced his mother to let him bring. His fishing rod lies on the ground beside him, the lure still submerged under the water. As he plays, Chester's feet swing wildly, kicking the yellow life jackets and the long coil of rope under his seat in the canoe. Every kick creates a dull, persistent thump. Chester watches from the corner of his eye as his mother's face turns the colour of his fiery hair, and her mouth slowly turns to a scowl.

She eventually lashes out at Chester, snatching the tablet from his hands. "Chester, enough! How old are you, eight? You certainly don't act like it!"

This tone of voice reminds Chester of his school teachers, which he does not like. *It's summer break*, he reminds himself. He shudders, thinking about his inevitable return to that torture dungeon.

Sunita continues, "Do you know how many children would love to be in your position? Many kids your age sit at home all summer with a babysitter, banging their heads against the wall!"

"I'll gladly switch with them, then," he mumbles, quietly enough to escape his mother's ears.

"All kids ever do nowadays is go on those darn electronics, never once lifting their heads to stop and smell the flowers! You don't observe, Chester. You don't. . . ."

Chester zones out; it is a useful skill he acquired during the copious number of hours being taught and lectured he has endured daily. His eyes focus on the shoreline, counting the trees and bushes, the people who sit sunbathing. He counts the towels, looks at the patterns. It is all so distracting, so intriguing, so much better than being bored; sitting on a hard, wooden bench; fishing for fish that probably aren't there; wasting life away.

Chester is overcome with a feeling of loneliness. He wants to throw himself overboard and swim away to shore—somewhere other than here. He hears his mother's muffled voice take on a soothing tone, and he feels her soft arms grasp his shoulders.

"Chester. . . ." She turns her face to his.

Chester avoids her gaze. He looks down into the water. The bottom is unclear. His vision blurs. He watches as a single tear falls from his brown eyes and into the deep green pond. It lands with a plop, and a ripple forms. It grows bigger with every breath, a never-ending circle. Chester wonders when the circles ever cease to continue.

A melancholy smile sprouts on Chester's face, like a tulip emerging from the snow.

by Amanda Braam (14 years)
Kitchener, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

Hope Bubble

It was a tragic day. Everybody was crying at the funeral for the four people—all except for Dauvin. His face showed no sign of gloom or anguish. Lying in the coffins was his family, the people whom he cared about the most. *It was just bad timing and bad luck*, he thought. Inside Dauvin's mind, he was shouting unkind things. Dauvin took one last look at his father, grandmother, sister, and sister's friend. He glanced at his mother, who was crying heartily, and his aunt, who was trying to console his mother. Then, he turned away.

All the way home his mother did not talk to him. At home, Dauvin went into his room right away. In his room, he played games, furiously touching the screen of his phone. There was a knock on the door. "Come in," he said, without even looking up.

His mother came in; her eyes were red and swollen. "Oh, Dauvin," his mother moaned. "How am I supposed to live with a boy who sheds no tears at his own family's funeral?"

That got Dauvin's attention. He looked up from his screen, straight into his mother's eyes. In his mother's eyes, he saw frustration, sadness, and other feelings that Dauvin had never seen before.

"You are soulless, boy!" shouted his mother. "You do not have a heart at all. You do not know the meaning of sadness!"

Dauvin stared at his mother for a long time. "Do you know me?" Dauvin asked. "Where is my kind and bright mother in that hopeless body? Where?" The last word became a shout more than a question.

Dauvin's mother just stared for a moment. Then, tears came out of her eyes. "Dauvin, I am hopeless," she answered. She began to dissolve into a golden swirl. Then, she was gone.

"No!" Dauvin shouted. His mother had dissolved like any other person does once they have lost hope.

Dauvin ran outside towards the forest, which was just a yard away from his house. He raced through the woods until he could run no longer.

"Unspeakable!" Dauvin shouted. "Why did they die, leaving us almost hopeless?"

A voice asked, "Almost hopeless? Unspeakable! Why are you angry, my boy?"

"Because it was very unkind to die!" Dauvin answered in a muffled voice.

"Do you really think that it was unkind to die? Come here, boy?" the voice spoke loud and clear.

Dauvin did not answer. He trudged towards the voice. Soon, he could see a campfire and a man sitting on a log.

"Call me Mr. McTuffy," Mr. McTuffy said. "What is your name?"

"Dauvin," Dauvin answered quietly.

"Well, Dauvin," Mr. McTuffy said. "There is no reason to not cry and put a wrong reason behind all of this. I was an orphan, but I lost hope until this." Mr. McTuffy held out a golden bubble in the air. The bubble began to change into different colours, and many different languages and numbers appeared on the bubble. Mr. McTuffy seemed to know what it said.

"Interesting," he said. "Now, I know what happened to you, Dauvin. This is a hope bubble, and it told me about you. It said that your father helped you dream and your sister cared about you the most. You have not dissolved because of the hope your father planted in you and the love your sister gave you."

Tears ran down Dauvin's cheek at the mention of his old life—a peaceful and joyful life before this happened. "You don't know!" Dauvin cried.

"I might not know, but it does not mean I do not know the feeling," Mr. McTuffy said. "The inside of the hope bubble is a world for you and me. I believe you are going?"

"Yes," Dauvin answered, swiping his hand over his eyes to get the tears off.

The hope bubble grew to fit a child and an adult. Smiling at each other, hand in hand, they vanished through the whiteness.

by Cara Yoon (11 years)
Coquitlam, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Trade Winds

Like the wind, life was unpredictable. It had no boundaries to what events it could conjure. Like the wind, life could be kind, gentle—or it could completely flip sides and become dark, unrelenting. Life could take as easily as it could give.

Lyra Fischer often contemplated life, and with life, the wind. It was her favourite element, simply because of how wild and untameable it was. No one could control the wind, not really. They could only guide it on its journey.

Lyra was tired. She was tired of her parents fighting, of living in silence. She was tired of the same spidery cracks in her bedroom ceiling. She was tired of the rain, tired of the sun, tired of crowds and emptiness. Lyra was tired of everything.

She was lying in her bedroom now, pondering gloomily. She had not been given a westerly wind, strong and furious, nor a periodic one, constantly fluctuating and evolving. No, Lyra's wind was a trade wind: constant and unchanging.

A knock sounded at her door. "Yeah, Mom?" It was easy to recognize her mother's timid raps on the wood, unlike her father's incessant pounding. Everything about her mother was soft and silent now.

The door opened a sliver, allowing a dark eye to peer through. "Lyra . . . ? Supper was hours ago . . . you didn't show up . . . ?" She said everything like a question.

"I wasn't hungry, Mom. It's fine."

"Do you . . . want me to save you your portion . . . ?"

"It's fine," Lyra said again. The door closed silently.

Lyra turned her head towards her window. She could see the moon now—large, milky, and full, looming calmly over the world in a way Lyra envied. The moon made her feel sad and endlessly lonely. She did not like the moon, but she respected it. Like the wind, the moon could not be harnessed. It could not be influenced by greedy hands.

Lyra fell asleep in the cool light of the moon.

She woke in a field of morning glories. Music was playing. Somewhere far away, a pair of soft hands glided over the keys of a piano, melodies spilling from their touch. Lyra found herself leaning into its sound.

She tried to stand but was unable to. Her legs were secured in the cool grass with vines that crept through the innocent bunches of flowers, pinning her to the ground. Lyra felt a presence beside her, but no one was there.

"Do you hear that? The music?" came a voice not her own. *Whose?*

"I hear it," she replied in her thoughts. *"It's beautiful. Sad."*

"What do you hear within the notes?" the voice asked.

"Sadness. Loneliness. Nostalgia. . . ."

"Familiar, is it not? This song?"

Lyra found herself unable to reply. For whatever reason, her thoughts drifted towards her mother.

"Yes, you understand. You understand the music."

She thought of the permanent bracelets and necklaces her mother wore hidden beneath her clothes—jewellery that shamed her; marks that showed her life was not hers to keep.

"This song reminds me of my mom."

"This song is your mom, Lyra—her torment, her own personal hurricane."

"Why doesn't she leave him? Why doesn't she take us and leave him?"

"Listen to the music, Lyra. Her life is not hers to keep. Her winds died away long ago."

This upset Lyra. *"You can't force winds to die. They—"*

"You can encourage them to fade into nothing, with the right words. Winds cannot be controlled, but they can be influenced. It is up to you whether or not your winds give in to that influence."

"My mom's winds . . . they died when she said she wouldn't leave him. . . ."

The piano rose to a crescendo in the distance. Tears dripped down Lyra's face and landed softly on her bare legs—marked legs. *"Are my winds dead too?"*

"No. Trade winds cannot be snuffed out, Lyra. They are constant, unchanging. They fade for no one but yourself."

The music lifted to deafening heights, and suddenly, all Lyra could see was the giant moon looming over her, reaching its arms down to her encouragingly. Wind appeared and picked up speed, launching the field into chaos. Morning glories were ripped from their roots and whipped around at a blinding pace.

"I don't want my winds to die."

"Don't let them."

"I don't want to give up."

"Don't."

Lyra's eyes flew open. She drew her first breath, then another. Lyra decided that night, lying awake, that she wouldn't give up just yet—not while her winds blew steadily.

by *Hava Sky* (15 years)

Laval, Québec

HONOURABLE MENTION

Empty

Everything was white to Julia—or foggy, like being stuck in a cloud. There were voices all around her whispering, but she couldn't see anyone. The room smelled fresh, and there was a cold breeze running through, assuring her she was alive. No matter how much she tried, nothing would change. She was trapped in an endless void of white smoke. Her memory was fuzzy, the only thing she could recall was screaming.

"Can you hear me, Julia?" someone asked.

She was free to move; her hands clasped at a sturdy mattress. "Loud and clear, but I can't see anything," Julia responded. "Why exactly is that?"

"Don't you remember?" her father's voice interrupted. "The sparklers?" He stopped as if that explained it all. When she didn't respond, he got the hint and continued, "Your friends were over, and you stole a few of my sparklers. When you were playing with them at the park, one of them flew into your eye." His voice was coated in grief as if talking about it might be the very thing that would end him.

"You're lucky you brought her here when you did, or it could have been worse. Did you feel any pain?" the other person, whom she assumed was a doctor, asked.

"I remember it burned horribly for the first few seconds, but the pain started to numb. My body must have shut down because I can't remember anything after that." It all hit her like a brick to the chest; she had been trying to avoid the rising thought that this was permanent. "Tell me, will I see again?" her voice cracked as she asked the question.

No one responded for a while, and the anticipation chewed at her insides. She needed to know the answer, but at the same time feared the truth. Everything felt empty and surreal; she wanted nothing more than this nightmare to end.

"I'm sorry, there isn't anything we can do to reverse the damage," the doctor finally admitted.

Julia just nodded, although she felt like screaming. *This isn't happening. This isn't happening!* The rest of her life was going to be blank. She would never be able to recognize another colour, another human face, . . . *anything*. She started sobbing and felt hot tears drip down her face. The worst part was she never appreciated what she had; she never took in the sunflowers that grew outside her bedroom window or what her father truly looked like. She tried to imagine him but felt horrible when she couldn't even remember the colour of his eyes.

Julia jumped slightly as a finger pressed against her cheek, wiping away her tears. She calmed down when her dad spoke up, whispering softly. "Hey," he began, "we worked out different options and programs to help you. This might be difficult at first, but nothing we can't handle, right?"

"I don't want to live like this," she cried.

Two weeks passed, and Julia was finally allowed to return home from the hospital. As her father guided her through the front door, cheers filled the entire room. The smell of wine was extremely strong—stronger than she remembered it being.

A hand wrapped around her wrist and led her somewhere. "Julia," a familiar relative said, "Kelly wants to see you. . . ."

After meeting her entire family and updating them on the past two weeks, everyone had finally cleared out, and Julia found herself sitting by her bedroom window, taking it all in.

There was a shuffle of footsteps as someone crept up to the room. They decided to knock on the door that had been propped open, as if she hadn't heard them already. "Sweetie?" her father muttered. "Are you okay?"

Julia didn't respond. She continued to sit on the edge of her window. The air around her felt clean, it smelled of summer and earth, mixed in with the sunflowers that were growing all over.

Obviously, she missed her sight, but she was learning to appreciate moments like this more. “Sit,” she finally replied.

“I watered them while you were gone,” her dad chuckled, “. . . the sunflowers.”

A smile crept across her face; she hadn’t asked him to, but she was glad he did. It then struck her that this was also hard on him. Maybe he used the flowers as an excuse to visit her room every day, while she was at the hospital. “I’m still here, Dad.”

“I know.” His arm rested on her shoulder, and she felt warm all over.

by Susan Verdes (14 years)
Mississauga, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Good-Luck Necklace

Crystal gazed at the pile of birthday gifts on her bed: three. Her family was poor, so they lived in a small house barely big enough for five. She and her younger brothers shared the attic, which was tiny and cold in the winter. Her father worked long hours to pay for food.

“Crystal?” her mother called from downstairs, “did you get your gifts?”

Crystal leaned over the railing and nodded. “Thanks, but is Daddy home?”

“He just walked in. Bring down your presents, honey.”

Crystal grabbed them and raced downstairs.

Matthew and Marcus ignored her as she said hello, so she turned to her dad.

“Happy ninth birthday, Crystal!” he smiled as she reached up and kissed him. Then, he added, “Go and open your presents now, birthday girl!”

Crystal sat down and gently opened her first gift. It was a pair of woollen socks. “Thank you!” she cried and began to open the second gift. It was a chocolate bar. Crystal split the bar into six pieces and handed them out, keeping two for herself. Then, she opened the remaining gift. It was a golden necklace with a four-leaf clover charm on it. “It’s so pretty!” she gasped and put it on. “Thanks!”

“You’re welcome, honey. Now, run along to bed,” said her mother, and Crystal did so.

The next morning, Crystal sat up in bed and narrowly avoided hitting her head on a low ceiling bar. She didn’t slip on the spilled water on the stairs and checked the chairs for mouse traps (which she normally sat on) before sitting down. Then, Crystal remembered that she was wearing the necklace. She took it off and . . . *whack!* She was smacked in the face by her brothers. “What’s going on?” Crystal wondered aloud. She put it back on and stopped herself before she dumped pepper in her soup. “It’s good luck!” she whispered and ran upstairs to place the necklace in the only treasure box she owned.

“Mom!” she called as she headed back down. “My necklace is good luck!”

Her mother chuckled, “Well, I suppose we all need one of those then, huh?” and walked away, shaking her head.

That night, as she lay awake, Crystal whispered, “One day, they will see. One day, we will need my necklace, I know it. When that time comes, they will believe me.” She continued to whisper until, finally, she drifted off to sleep.

Morning came, and snowflakes began to fall outside. Crystal ran downstairs, for the attic was freezing. Her brothers were already there.

“Morning, honey,” her dad greeted as he left the house for work.

It was unusually cold this morning, and the snow was falling freely down from the sky. But that didn’t stop the children from playing outside. Matthew and Marcus threw snowballs at Crystal, while she tried to make a snow angel.

“Crystal!” Marcus shouted. “Come throw snowballs with us!”

But Crystal’s non-gloved fingers were cold, and her teeth chattered. “No. I’ll meet you inside.”

At dinner that night, everyone including Crystal’s mother was getting cold. “Crystal,” she said, “take the blankets from the twins’ bed and put them on the couch. It is too cold for them up there.”

Crystal did as she was told, and soon, the twins were in bed. As she headed upstairs, her mother stopped her.

“I’m sorry, Crystal, but there are no leftover blankets. Will you be all right upstairs?” Her mother looked worried.

“I’ll be fine, Mom. Goodnight,” Crystal replied and headed up to bed.

She wrapped herself in her single, thin blanket. Before she settled down, however, she pulled her necklace from her treasure box. “It’s very cold tonight,” she whispered to it, “but I don’t want luck. Luck won’t make me warm, will it?” As if in response, the necklace dissolved

in her fingers, leaving her with nothing. Crystal smiled to herself. “My family doesn’t have luck, so I won’t either.”

And with that, Crystal fell asleep with her last smile on her face. She would never see the necklace on the floor. She would never see her family again. But she was *happy*.

by Tara Carnell (13 years)
Fort St John, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

All He Had Left

Elliot was the liveliest nine-year-old Terrence had ever seen. And that was saying something, considering he had eight siblings growing up. Unfortunately, they had all passed away. Terrence's daughter and grandson were all he had left.

Terrence stared out the car window sullenly as rain dripped down the outside. He had been anxious to see his grandson and was disappointed when he had learned that he was still at school and wouldn't return until after Terrence had to be back home to take his medication.

"It's a shame Elliot had school. I was certain he had today off," Maria, Terrence's kind but overbearing pushy daughter stated from the front seat.

She seems far too perky for this desolate day, thought Terrence. He just sighed in response.

"We're here!" She unbuckled her seat belt and unlocked the car. "Dad? Let's go inside."

Terrence didn't respond.

Maria let out a sigh of her own then opened the door and walked around to his side to help him out. She pulled open the door. "Let's go inside, Dad," she repeated.

Terrence let out a small grumble and got out of the car, his joints cracking as he stood up properly. He grabbed his cane and started making his way inside.

As soon as he closed the car door, Maria rushed into the house, leaving her elderly father to make his way inside alone in the pouring rain. When he eventually arrived, he was reprimanded by Maria for forgetting to remove his shoes.

Once he was inside the house, he settled on Maria's couch that was covered in brown dog hair. "Don't sit there!" Maria scolded him. "That's Ralph's couch!"

Terrence stood up slowly. He had to grip his cane extremely tightly as he came to his feet. "I don't see why the dog needs an entire couch to himself." Although he loved their dog, Ralph, it was the truth. The old dog didn't even have the physical strength to jump onto the couch. Terrence shuffled over to the old, ratty chair that he had bought when he was in his twenties, which was sixty years ago.

"Dad, will you be okay here for a second?" Maria asked. "I need to do something in the kitchen."

"Of course I'll be okay!" Terrence was insulted that his own daughter thought he needed supervision in what once was his own home.

Maria gave Terrence a tense smile then darted into the kitchen. Terrence strained to hear what she was saying, but his old ears weren't as good as they were thirty years ago. He could barely make out the words "Elliot . . . devastated . . . retire . . . expensive. . . ."

Terrence grunted. Now, he was curious. He pushed himself up once again and made his way to the kitchen as quickly as possible, standing just out of Maria's eyeshot.

". . . It's just getting too expensive, and we can't afford that stay-at-home nurse anymore. You know Nathaniel? He works in a care home and says he can give us a discount on rent—"

"You want to put me in a home?" Terrence interrupted, shocked.

Maria turned around quickly, looking surprised to see her father standing there. "Why were you listening in on my conversation?" she asked angrily.

"I wanted some water!" Terrence exclaimed. "Why were you talking all this junk about putting me in a home without telling me first?"

"I'm going to have to call you back," Maria said into the phone and hung up. "I didn't tell you because I knew you would be mad!"

"Oh, I wonder why!" Terrence replied sarcastically. "If you put me in a home, how would I see Elliot? And don't go telling me that you would visit me, because we both know that's a lie!"

"It isn't a lie!" Maria said, almost yelling now. "Elliot loves you, and I would bring him to see you—"

"I'm done with this!" Terrence shouted. "Goodbye!" He turned away from Maria, his face red with anger. If he'd been physically able to, he would have stormed away, but due to his old

age, he couldn't, so he shuffled away angrily. As he was leaving, he slammed the door behind him. He could hear Ralph barking inside the house.

What a great day, Terrence thought to himself sarcastically. He was mad that he didn't even get to see Elliot. Terrence wondered how he would get home without Maria driving.

He pulled out his old flip phone and called a cab.

by Erika Howes (12 years)

Chestermere, Alberta

HONOURABLE MENTION

A Whittling Pair

Once, there lived a boy named Zach. He was ten years old, and his father was a whittler. His father made wooden toys and sold them at the market. Zach was very shy and did not have any friends, so he often sat in his father's workshop watching him whittle. When he wasn't in the workshop, he would go down to the river and play with the toys his father made him.

One day, he saw a moving truck drive down the road. He thought to himself, *I wonder if that moving truck is going to the house next to mine.*

The next day, Zach ate breakfast and started to walk down to the river. As he walked, he noticed the moving truck parked at the house next door. He was amazed to see that he was getting new neighbours. He hoped they had a boy his age to play with and maybe he would have a friend.

That Saturday, he was at the market and watching his dad's whittling booth when a boy came up and asked, "Did you really carve all these toys?" he said, looking surprised.

"No, my dad did," Zach said, sounding disappointed.

"Then, what are you carving?" he asked.

"Oh, this is just a whistle I've been working on for a while," Zach replied.

"Cool. Can you teach me how to carve something just like that? I've always wanted to learn how to do that," the boy asked.

"Sure, I can. I'm here every Saturday all day."

The boy responded, "Well, I just moved here and can't come every Saturday, but when you're free, can we meet by Huckleberry River?"

"Yeah, that's good, but I'll have to check with my dad first. My name is Zach. What's your name?"

"My name is Jason. You're the first person I've met here. What do you do for fun around here?"

"I just go to the river and whittle," said Zach. They exchanged phone numbers and agreed to call later that day to arrange when they'd meet up.

When later came, Zach was nervous to call but figured he'd give it a try because he really wanted a friend. He dialled Jason's number and thought through what he would say. He was surprised when Jason picked up after one ring. "Uh, hello, . . . Jason? This is Zach . . . from the market . . . the kid with the wooden whistle . . . remember me? Uh, do you . . . um, want to uh . . . go to the river now?"

"Sure! I'll meet you there," said Jason.

Zach grabbed his supplies and rushed out the door.

When he stepped out of the house, he looked to his left and was surprised to see that Jason was his brand-new neighbour. They both looked at each other and laughed as they met on the street instead of at the river. They both walked down to the river talking about how Zack had seen Jason's moving truck earlier that morning and how random it was that their houses were right beside each other.

Once they got to the river, Zack started to explain what the tools were and how they worked. Zach got to work right away teaching Jason how to patiently and gently carve a whistle. As it began to take shape, Jason commented, "I've wanted to learn this for a very long time, and now, I got my chance. This is really cool!"

"I've never had a friend who liked whittling or even cared about it," replied Zach. "I'm glad you like it too."

From then on, they carved things from whistles to toy trains, and through their whole childhood, they were great friends.

by Titus Kennedy (10 years)
Crofton, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

A Boy's Best Friend

"Hi," said Kai as he ran in with his big bag of gear.

Cooper got up from the ground and ran over to him, with his furry tail wagging.

"Hey, Joey," Kai said, "are you ready yet?"

"One minute," Joey called as he ran around the house grabbing his stuff and putting it in his bag. "I'll meet you outside with Cooper."

A minute passed, and Joey rushed outside with Cooper at his feet. The two boys hopped on their bikes and rode off with Cooper right behind them.

Soon, they got to Lake Bernack. They opened their bags and pulled out their scuba gear. They got all ready then headed out into the small lake to look for treasure. After searching for a while, they decided they were going to go swimming before they had to go home.

"Joey," Kai called from the shore, "I have to go to the bathroom."

"Okay," Joey said. "I'll just be a few minutes, then we should leave."

From out in the middle of the lake, the waves knocked Joey under the water. He started to drown, and Cooper jumped in and tried to save him. Cooper was about to grab Joey, but before he could, a big wave sent him back to land and washed Joey out farther.

"Cooper!" Kai called when he came back and saw the big wet dog lying on the beach.

"What's wrong?" Kai looked out and couldn't see Joey.

They started looking further and ventured around the lake. They found a large cave on the other side. They went inside the cave and split up when two tunnels appeared.

When Cooper continued on, he spotted Joey lying on the floor with large cuts all over his body. Cooper barked to call Kai to help him. Kai ran towards them, and the two of them carried Joey out of the cave. Kai pulled out his phone and called the ambulance.

At the hospital, Joey was all bandaged up, lying on a bed. "Now, Joey," the doctor said, "you will have to stay here and rest for four more days, and make sure you take your medicine."

"All right," Joey said sadly.

His mom walked in one morning when he was home. "I've got a surprise for you," she said excitedly. Then, a cute, fluffy puppy ran in the room, jumped up on Joey's bed, and started licking him like crazy.

"Mom!" Joey said happily. "Thank you!"

She smiled then said, "Well, why don't you name him?"

Joey thought for a minute. Then, he said, "How about Baxter? Cooper and Baxter."

Cooper looked up from the floor at the new puppy. Baxter jumped off the bed and ran over to Cooper and laid down beside him. Cooper looked sadly up at Joey.

"Don't worry," his mom said, "they will be best friends in no time."

by Devon Metler (10 years)

Fenwick, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Platform

Bang! I watched my friend Ricky get shot by a masked man in complete black, and then someone knocked me out.

A few minutes later, Ricky said to me, “Uh, where are we?”

“I don’t know, but I smell a lot of gasoline.”

The buildings looked like the ones in video games—very colourful, strong, and a little glitchy—but it looked very nice.

“Well, we’re not on Earth, that’s for sure,” Ricky said to me. “Well, I want to go see some of the locals here,” Ricky continued.

“Wait, I feel as if there’s gonna be a trap somewhere around. . . .”

“*Ahhh!*” screamed Ricky as he dived down a deep, illuminated hole.

“Well, if it’s illuminated, I’m guessing it’s good?” I said to myself and then jumped down the opening.

A couple of minutes later, I saw something blue lying on the ground, and I said, “Wait, is that Ricky? It is!” So, I stabbed my army knife into the wall beside me to slow me down, and once I was close enough to the ground, I dropped down and landed right beside Ricky.

“What is this place?” Ricky asked me.

“Don’t know,” I told Ricky. “It looks pleasant though,” I said sarcastically.

“Wait, is that a ladder?” Ricky asked me.

“It could be another trap,” I told him.

“Who cares?” he said to me and started to climb the ladder, but as soon as he was a metre off the ground, the ladder vanished!

“I told you,” I said while Ricky was lying on the ground.

“Okay, okay, but at least I tried,” Ricky said to me in annoyance.

“Oh, look, another ladder, I’ll climb this one.” So, I started to ascend up the ladder, and I was actually quite surprised that it wasn’t a trap, so I yelled down to Ricky, “Okay, it’s clear,” and Ricky started to climb the ladder.

A couple of minutes later, we got to the top, and we saw an adult in a white lab coat with dark-blue glasses. “Wait, I thought adults don’t celebrate Halloween?” I joked.

“Hello, my name is Dr. Virus,” he said to me as if he hadn’t even heard me.

“Wait . . . just out of the blue, do you know anyone who owns a tranquillizer dart?” I asked him.

“Why do you ask me that?” he asked me back.

“Oh, well, this morning someone shot my friend here with one, and then I got knocked out,” I told him.

“Oh, that was me,” he told us honestly.

“So, you’re the one who brought us here then?” I asked him.

“Yep,” he told us as if it were a good thing.

“Can we see the thing that brought us here?” I asked him.

“You mean this thing?” He showed it to us. It was silver with a red knob and a green button.

It was a teleportation machine! Once I saw it, I exclaimed. “Get it!”

So, Ricky and I leapt at Dr. Virus and got the teleportation machine.

It teleported me and Ricky back to Earth. “Well, that was the longest we were ever in a parallel universe!” I said to Ricky.

“That’s the first time we were ever in a parallel universe!” Ricky replied.

by Tristan Balfour (9 years)
Revelstoke, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Magical Flower

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Ellie. She had black, smooth hair, and she was seventeen. Her favourite colour was turquoise. She lived on Sparkly Street, and she had a silver car.

One day, the girl wanted a flower. She got in her car and drove to the flower store called Flowerfull Flowers. It was Ellie's favourite flower store. Ellie went in the store with a big smile. Then, suddenly, she caught something in the corner of her eyes. She saw the most beautiful flower in the whole universe. It was sparkling, and it was Ellie's favourite colour: turquoise, and the flower cost \$3.99. Best of all, the flower was enchanted and magical; it did not need water! Ellie did not know that. She happily took the plant home and planted the flower in her garden right away. And, of course, she started watering it. Then, Ellie went to bed.

The next day, she checked her new plant, and the plant had grown so high that she could not see the top of the plant anymore. That meant Ellie could not see the beautiful turquoise flower! She became very sad and called the plant doctor right away. The name of the doctor was Holly, and Dr. Holly said sadly, "Sorry, I cannot fix your plant or make it shorter." That made Ellie cry. She said bye to Dr. Holly and thanked her for trying.

Ellie did not give up. She was thinking really hard. She thought there must be a way to bring that plant down to her height. She really wanted to look at the flower at the top of the plant. Then, all of a sudden, she got an idea. She hopped to her feet and said, "I'll stop watering it and see what happens."

She did not water it for two days, and she was hoping that the flower would get shorter and not die. On the third day, she looked at her plant and discovered something amazing. The flower was at her height! She was so happy that she jumped up and down and called Dr. Holly. The doctor was also very happy, and she was amazed too. She learned something from Ellie. Ellie did not give up on her plant even when the doctor had told her the bad news. She thought hard and tried to save it. The plant survived, and Ellie could see the beautiful flower again because of her hard work.

Ellie also called her family to come over to see the plant. Her family also liked the plant just as much as Ellie, and they had a great celebration. Ellie also now knew that the plant was magical, and she said to herself, "I don't think I even need to water my flower because it's enchanted!"

by Clara Tiong (8 years)
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HONOURABLE MENTION

A Space Legend

In 3382 AD, the president of North America wanted North Americans to set a world record by being the first humans to visit Planet X. He wanted to find two hundred people to go to Planet X, but he only found one hundred. Now, he needed money to fund the project. The rocket needed to have 1,500,000 boosters for liftoff and fuel to reach the prized planet. It took another fifty years to afford the rocket. It took another thirty years to build the platform and rocket boosters. By this time, the president had to retire because presidents only held office for sixty years at this time.

Luckily, the new president agreed with the plan, and a month later, the crew was ready and everything was in place. The new president went to the launch pad, gave a speech, and gave the crew a personal call number to be able to speak directly to the president. The call number was: 5532NA22. The launch was a success, and the rocket had fierce power with fire as hot as the core of the sun. It burned everything it touched. The elevator fell down, causing it to turn into an acid and, finally, black dust.

Meanwhile, back in the rocket, Crew#2 suggested that they search for a different Planet X. That is when Crew#82 disagreed with Crew#2. Soon, Crew#59 disagreed with both of them, and soon, the rocket became a madhouse. Even the captain got into a fight with the driver, and the ship was just gliding. At that moment, crashes were heard on top of the rocket. Everyone froze, wondering what was going on. The arguing started up again, but Crew#36 was curious and went upstairs to the observation deck to see what was there.

In front of the window hovered thirty UFOs with at least five aliens in each craft. The crew member let out a scream, and everyone below came up to see what was going on. When they got there, they saw Crew#36 had been killed. To their shock, nobody moved. Quickly, Crew#58 pressed a button, and a forcefield blocked them all from the aliens.

The alien intruders were breaking the force field down, and the crew was preparing to attack using laser beams. When the wall broke down, the crew fired their lasers at once and created a blinding white light that nobody could see through. When the light faded, the aliens were completely gone, even the UFOs. They figured that they had blasted the aliens into space.

Just when they were going to the main room, the aliens blasted through the rocket like one thousand fierce lions with high-powered bombs. After the laser light faded again, the crew was trapped in a cage.

On the other side of the rocket, however, Crew#82, #55, and #22 had escaped into the bathroom. They quickly locked themselves into the bathroom and called the president as fast as they could. The beeping from the call alerted the aliens, and they broke down the bathroom door. The crew members froze with fear and found themselves in a cage as well. The aliens called their planet to handle the crew members and took off towards the Earth.

The Earth was already preparing for the attack since the call from the rocket. When the aliens arrived, Earth forces were using every single weapon they had.

The aliens dropped a giant power bomb, and the Earth looked like a burned meteorite. Thousands of emergency spaceships escaped, but the scorched Earth managed to defeat the aliens in a space battle. They learned which areas of space they could go to in order to avoid these evil aliens. Eventually, the president led the survivors to Planet X, and the new planet was perfect for humans to live from then on.

by Ryan Li (8 years)
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