

# WRITE FOR 2023

An Anthology of Stories and Poems Written by Teens for the 2023  
Write @ Your Library Creative Writing Contest



THE OWEN SOUND & NORTH GREY UNION PUBLIC LIBRARY  
2023

WRITE FOR 2023

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*Junior Short Story – First Place*

**THAT’S NOT A PONY!**

*By: Stella Torrie*

“Ok, mom, I'm ready to go,” called Elizabeth as she shut the trailer doors and checked that she had everything in the tack room of the horse trailer.

“Alright hon, I'll be out in a minute,” responded Lizzy's mom in a cheerful voice.

The drive to the horse show was beautiful. It was now fall and the leaves were falling, lining their paved driveway. They lived just outside a quaint little town called Palgrave. Lizzy was excited for the show, because it was the season finale! She had been showing her mule, who she called Huck at local shows all summer, but her mom had promised her she could go to a big show at the end of the season. As her mom turned the old Chevy truck and the little, two-horse trailer into the parking lot of the big Palgrave Equestrian Center, it was like all Lizzy's dreams were coming true at once. To add to the excitement, Lizzie’s best friend Olivia was going to show with her pony Muffin.

“We’re here!” Lizzy exclaimed. As they parked by their stalls she felt as though she was at the Olympics or something as exciting as that.

“Ok, Lizzy, don't be too excited, we are only here for two days, and you have done it before,” said Mom.

“I know but that was with Polly and she was such a slow pony, and besides, she bucked me off on the first day, Huck would never do that.”

Her mom smiled at her and said, “Ok, anyways, let's get the poor guy off the trailer and into his stall for a rest.”

“OK, I'll grab the lead rope if you can get the stall ready?”

“Sounds like a plan Lizzy.”

“I’m going to go find Olivia and Muffin,” Lizzy said in a loud voice, making sure her mom heard her as she grabbed her bike and riding helmet out of the back of the truck.

“Alright, see you later then?”

“Yeah Mom, can you meet me at the pavilion for lunch in an hour?”

“Sure, I can get you lunch then. What would you like to eat?” asked Lizzy’s mom, Mrs. Clark. Lizzy was too far away so she just heard her so she stuck up her thumb behind her. Mrs. Clark just stood there wondering what she should get Lizzy for lunch at the pavilion.

“Hey Liv!” Lizzy said in a very excited voice.

“Oh my goodness, you’re here! I can’t even believe it!” Olivia said.

“Me either, it’s crazy. Are you showing today or just schooling in the rings?”

“Oh, I’m heading down to school in the rings in about ten minutes or so. What about you Lizzy? What does Huck think about it here?”

“Oh I won’t school him, Huck does better if he doesn’t see the jumps ahead of time. He loves it here!” Lizzy said as they both chuckled about it.

“Anyway, I’d better get going if I’m going to school in the rings before they close for the afternoon.”

“Yea I better go just to make sure Mom hasn’t lost Huck yet!” Lizzy joked as she started to walk away. Lizzy then headed down to the pavilion for a late lunch with her mom.

“There you are, Hon. I was so worried about you.”

“Oh, sorry Mom, I was just talking to Liv for a bit!”

“Yeah I figured, I went ahead and got you a chicken Caesar wrap.”

“Thanks Mom, that’s my favorite. Did you give Huck water before you came down?” inquired Lizzie.

“No, I thought you did?”

“Nope, I thought you did. Anyway, he’ll be ok for a couple of more minutes. I’ll do it when I get back”.

The next morning Lizzy went out to start to get ready for her many shows that day. Her morning show was a flat show and her

afternoon show was a jumping round. She gave Huck his morning grain because he needed something in his stomach then she grabbed his tack and changed into her show clothes while Mrs. Clark tacked him up. Once he was tacked up, Lizzy got on and headed down to the rings. She first tried to go to the warm up ring and the people would not let her in. "Sorry, my perfect pony is scared of your silly, old, loud donkey."

They were complaining that their horses were scared of the mule and they would perform differently and that it was not safe to be in the ring with other kids. So, Lizzy and her Mom had to go down to a warm up ring that was farther away because that way the other horses couldn't see Huck.

When Lizzy was all warmed up she rode up to the big ring so she could have her show. When she got up to the big ring she immediately got in line so she could get into the ring.

"Huck is being a really good boy, isn't he mom?" asked Lizzy.

"Yes, he is behaving very well. Now let's see if we can get into this ring, shall we?"

"Let's move forward so we can get a good spot in the line. Ok Hon?"

"Ok, I hope they let us in. They turned down a pony that breathed weird I heard."

"I'm sure it'll be fine." They slowly moved their way up the line until they got to the edge of the ring.

"Ok Mom, I'm going in now. See you in a minute."

"Good luck!"

As Lizzy headed into the ring the judge stopped her and she had no idea why.

"Hi, do you know that donkeys are not allowed in the rated shows?" asked the judge, trying to be as nice as possible.

"Yes, I know."

"Ok, well then why did you bring a donkey then?"

"This is not a donkey, this is a mule and his name is Huck."

"Well, where is your Mom? Maybe I should talk to her."



"She is over by the fence and was going to watch my round if you let me go in".

"Well, do you have paperwork for this 'mule'?" she asked, clearly annoyed.

"Yes, well I think my mom has it, if you want to go talk to her about it."

"Ok, is she the one in the navy sweater by the gate?" the judge questioned and pointed to Lizzy's Mom.

"Yes, that is her."

"Ok I'm going to have to get you to stand outside the ring for now. And maybe we can call you back in." So, Lizzy left the ring and was just walking around by the outside of the ring. Meanwhile the judge and Mrs. Clark talked by the gate to the ring.

"Mrs. Clark?"

"Yes, that is me, what is the problem? Why is Lizzy leaving?"

"Your daughter is riding an equine that is not a horse and we don't allow donkeys here because it may bray and scare the other horses."

"She is riding a mule so it is half horse and he doesn't bray at all."

"Ok well technically we don't allow mules, but since he is half horse I will send it to the debate and will get back to you by the end of this show. Ok?"

"Ok, that sounds good, we will wait."

So the show went on and it was sent to the debate team and after an hour and a half it was finally approved.

The judge finally came to tell them.

"So we got the answer back and you guys were approved! You can go in after this pony."

"Ok thanks."

So, Lizzy and Huck went up and walked back in the ring and did their course and Mrs. Clark filmed it. Then she went back into the ring for ribbons.

"Now the judge will announce the ribbons for the 2 feet division!" it announced on the loudspeaker.

“In third place is Emily Deliemmo, in second place is Jessi King.”

At this point Lizzy thought that being on a mule she was not allowed to place but then...

“And in first place Lizzy Clark riding Crown Ridge Huckleberry Phinn.” Lizzy was in amazement and could barely even believe that she had got her first red ribbon to hang on her wall at home. This was a big deal for Lizzy emotionally because people were always telling her she can't do the big shows with Huck because he was a mule and mules can't do anything.

After the show Mrs. Clark and Lizzy packed up their stuff and loaded Huck up and then they headed home, when Lizzy got home she got Huck put away and ran up to her room to hang her new, red, first place ribbon in the center of her string of ribbons with a big smile on her face. She had never been so proud of her silly, old, loud donkey.

*Junior Short Story – Second Place*

THE DEVIL WENT DOWN TO CHICAGO

By: Griffin Hanrahan

Warren's legs felt like they were filling with lead as he pedaled his bike. He was late for an audition, again. Warren Right was a struggling musician who tried the whole solo career thing, but it never worked out. He decided the only way to fame was through a band, but that was also not working out. He had been to four auditions in the past week and had no luck with any of them. Warren finally arrived at the audition and sprinted with his guitar into the studio.

"You're late," a man wearing black jeans said.

"Sorry, there was, umm..." Warren looked at his bike, "traffic".

"Alright, whatever. Let's see what you've got," The bass player said. Warren pulled his guitar out of its case and started to play 'House of the Rising Sun' by 'The Animals.' Warren sang his heart out, his throat felt like a desert after he had finished.

"Okay then. We'll get back to you on our decision and uh, you can go now," said the man in the black jeans. When Warren got home, he checked his inbox on his computer. He found an e-mail from the band saying that he just wasn't the right fit. Warren collapsed into his bed; he was alone with his thoughts. Luckily, before he could think about anything serious, his girlfriend Olivia called him.

"Hey, what's up?" Warren said.

"How'd the audition go!?" She seemed so excited. Warren didn't want to disappoint her, but he had to.

"Not the greatest."

"Aww, I'm sorry Warren, but hey good news!" Whenever Olivia said, "good news" it always meant something bad. "I put an ad up online saying that you were looking for a manager!"

"Olivia, I don't need a manager."

"Yes, you do. You have been to five failed auditions!" Olivia was right.

"Okay, whatever. I'll see you tomorrow." Warren hung up and went on his computer to look at the ad. Somebody had already replied.

The message was under the name 'Mr. Dastard'. The message from Mr. Dastard said to meet him at a bar called McLarens'. Warren shut his computer and instantly fell asleep.

Warren woke up the next day and it was seven o'clock at night! Warren was usually an early riser. He decided not to focus on his twenty-hour slumber and instead on the fact that he was almost late to meet Mr. Dastard. He grabbed his coat and headed out the door.

When he arrived outside the bar, he could hear noise coming from inside. Warren opened the door and took two steps before he saw a pale man wearing a black trench coat with steel toe boots and a fedora tipped over his face. When the man looked up the entire room seemed to get quieter. Warren's focus was completely directed to this man. He must've been Mr. Dastard, Warren thought. Warren walked towards the table he was sitting at. It felt like he was being controlled. Warren sat down and looked into Mr. Dastard's eyes except he didn't see anything. Behind the lenses of his sunglasses Mr. Dastard's eyes just looked like swimming pools of black and red.

"Are you Mr. Dastard?" He wasn't sure how, but Warren already knew the answer to his question.

"That's me. That must make you Mr. Right."

"Just Warren. So, do you have any experience managing artists?" Warren asked.

"Oh yes, I've been managing for most of my life, but I've never worked for someone of your caliber." Warren could not help but smile. Although not saying much, Mr. Dastard had charmed him. Warren felt himself hanging on every word he said as the two talked. He felt almost hypnotized. After about an hour of talking, Mr. Dastard pulled out a contract.

"So just sign here," he pointed to a blank space at the bottom of the page, "then you, sir, will have yourself a new manager."

Warren laughed, "Sure." He picked up the pen and inched his hand towards the paper then he started to hear voices. They were voices of warning. Voices telling him not to sign the page, telling him what the consequences would be if he did.

"Just right there." Mr. Dastard pointed to the contract again.

“Right, sorry.” Warren ignored the ominous voices and wrote his signature in the blank space.

“Pleasure doing business with you, sir.” Mr. Dastard shook Warren’s hand.

“You too.” Warren smiled and left the bar.

Warren woke up the next morning. He got up and noticed that his pillow was stained red with blood, he must have gotten a nosebleed. Warren thought back to last night, meeting Mr. Dastard and then signing the contract. That was all he could remember. Warren later tried to call Mr. Dastard, but it went straight to voicemail. Before Warren even put down his phone it started to ring.

“Hello?” Warren said.

“Yes, hi, is this Warren Right?” The woman said.

“It is.”

“Hi, my name is Judy. I’m a representative of Universal Music Group. We have received the EP that you sent us, and we think you’d be a great fit for our label.” Warren fell back into his chair; it had been a dream of his since he was a kid to be a name under the very same record label. “Hello Warren, are you still there?”

“Yes, I’m here.”

“So, what do you think about our offer?” Judy asked.

“I think it sounds great!”

In the following months, Warren signed to Universal Music Group, which meant he could finally move out of his apartment and buy a nice home for him and Olivia. He also experienced a steady increase in fame, and after only two months Warren was booked to headline the main stage at Glastonbury Music Festival. Warren’s life seemed to be perfect except for that he had not heard from Mr. Dastard at all—and one other thing. Ever since the night that he met with Mr. Dastard, Warren’s body had been slowly shutting down. What started with nosebleeds led to coughing up blood. Warren had developed a case of tuberculosis.

One day, when Warren was going to hospital for his antibiotics the doctor noticed a tumor in his lung. Warren was diagnosed with lung cancer only weeks before Glastonbury.

The day finally came. Before his set, Warren coughed up a lot more blood than usual. Besides that, and the cancer that nobody knew about, he felt great. He got up on stage.

“What’s up Everybody!” The crowd of 100,000 roared with excitement. After Warren started singing the roar from the crowd grew louder. The first hour of his set went fine. His pain had subsided, he felt great. Warren opened his mouth to sing but felt a searing pain in his right lung. Warren stopped playing. It felt like someone had stabbed him in the chest. Soon, the pain grew to be too much for him. Warren clutched his chest and passed out.

Warren woke up in the hospital. There were X-rays of his chest all over the walls. The tumor in his lung had grown about three times its original size. The bustling noise of the busy hospital seemed to be muted and the doctors and nurses outside the window seemed to be moving in slow motion. He turned and saw him: a pale man in a black trench coat—Mr. Dastard. “You put me here, you did this to me!” Warren pointed to the X-rays of his tumor.

Mr. Dastard clapped. “Wow! You figured it out,” he said, sarcastically.

“Who are you?” Warren asked.

“Some call me The Stranger, Old Scratch, Djinn, but most prefer Devil.” Mr. Dastard smirked.

“Why did you do this to me, why me!?” Warren screamed.

“Oh, the person doesn't matter to me. Once your soul is gone, you're just another number on a piece of paper. But I'll tell you what. I'll give you two options; either stay here and die and the whole world mourns the loss of their favorite singer, or you go back to being the worthless loser you were before you met me.”

“But I get to live?” Warren asked.

“Ugh, sure, I guess you can live,” Mr. Dastard replied.

“Option number two—number two, obviously!”

“You know what, never mind.” Mr. Dastard snapped his fingers and was gone.

“What? No!” Warren screamed and the world went black.

Warren opened his eyes; he was back in his cramped basement apartment. His phone rang, it was Olivia. “Hello,” Warren said.

“Hey Warren. Are we still on for dinner tonight?” Warren almost cried when he heard his girlfriend's voice.

“Yeah, for sure.”

“Okay cool. See you then.” Warren hung up the phone and had the first good sleep in what felt like a year. Warren decided to quit his music career and he went back to college to become a teacher. He and Olivia got married and had two kids. And Warren vowed never to sign a contract like that again.

*Junior Short Story – Third Place*

THE LUMLEY TROPHY

*By: Liam Kuzdak*

He stood 5 foot 2, with long blond hair; Liam has always been a very sportive person, but his favourite sport was hockey. This was his first year of being captain of a AAA (Triple A) hockey team called “The Bulldogs”. Him and his teammates Tim, Charlie, Ryan, Wyatt, Richard, and his coach, Bradley. They were all getting ready for the biggest hockey tournament of their lives. This is a tournament where eight teams compete for the “Lumley Trophy”. This year the Bulldogs are in it to win it. Their team had only come close to the finals.

This year coach Bradly rented the team a bus to ride to the tournament in. Last year they had to ride in an old van.

The tournament was a long way away from the team's hometown, so they get to stop at lots of places to get food. So, they got on the bus and drove for three hours destined for Niagara Falls. Liam's plan was to sleep through the ride, until they get to the hotel.

When Liam was sleeping, he had a bad dream. His team was tied up in the final game of the tournament, and he had a penalty shot at the last second. If he scored, he'd win the trophy for his whole team, but if he missed they lost. The game was on his stick. As he got the puck on his stick, he started to stick handle really fast to deke the goalie out. Then he gradually started to skate faster. Finally, he shot it! But the worst thing happened, he hit the crossbar.

“Noooooooooooooooooooo!” he screamed.

The team lost the tournament. But then, he woke up. Everybody was laughing at him.

“What's so funny?” Liam said.

“What do you mean, ‘What's so funny?’” Tim said. “Everyone heard you screaming.”

“All right people, we're here, now everybody help me find the hotel,” Coach Bradly said. Soon they arrived at the hotel and got checked in. As they went to their room, they saw two other teams that were playing in the tournament arrive at the hotel. The first



team was “The Gunghos.” They were good, but not as good as the “The Warriors.” They were last year's champions. But this year they didn't have the same roster. Their best player got traded, so this year the Bulldogs had a good chance of winning.

That night they had their first, everybody was focused because if they lost they would get knocked out of the tournament.

First, the Bulldogs went on the ice to warm up, and to practice their shots. It was important to warm up the goalie so that he was ready for the game.

“All right guys, bring it in,” Coach Bradly exclaimed. “We only have to win two games to make the finals, so everybody, AIM for the net.”

Liam took the first faceoff, and he won it. He passed to Charlie the defender, and Liam went up the line. Then Charlie passed it back to Liam and he got a break away! He started to stickhandle very slowly and wide, first to the left, then right, then left again, until finally he shot... and he scored! The Bulldogs were up 1-0.

“Yeaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” Liam roared.

The announcer said through the speaker, “Bulldogs GOAL, scored by number 16, Liam Kuzdak.”

The puck was dropped for the next face off. Ryan took it this time. Ryan passed it to Charlie, but the other team knew what was going to happen, and they rammed right into Charlie. The ref called a penalty for two minutes. The whole Bulldogs bench was yelling at the other team. Charlie slowly got up, but he could barely even skate off the ice, so Liam and Wyatt had to help.

“There's no way he will be playing any more in the tournament,” said Ryan. “He's way too hurt.”

That was the end of the game, and the Bulldogs won. They are going to the next round to face “The Coyotes”.

“All right,” coach Bradley said, “we are down a player, this means we have to work extra hard to win the tournament.”

Later that night, coach Bradley was notified that Charlie had a broken collarbone! The whole team was worried, but they were also glad that he was going to be ok. Liam wanted to go to the

hospital and see Charlie, but he knew Charlie had to recover, so he couldn't see him.

The next morning the Bulldogs were set to go on the ice against the Coyotes and the team was nervous. Coach Bradley reminded them that morning at breakfast that the team needed to stay focused because a loss would mean an early exit from the tournament - and nobody wanted to go home early. In the dressing room Liam, Ryan, and Wyatt were talking about their strategy, and plays they thought would earn them the win.

Half way through the first period Liam and his line mates decided it was time to execute the strategy they were talking about in the dressing room. Wyatt took the puck into the offensive zone on the right wing, while Ryan and Liam followed at center and on the left wing. Wyatt shot the puck around the boards to the back of the net toward where Liam was skating. Ryan skated to the front of the net to distract the goalie. The Coyotes defense thought Ryan was going to receive a pass from behind the net. But to their amazement instead, they watched Liam flex his stick and scoop up the puck onto the blade, keeping it below shoulder height, and swoop it around the far goal post into the net for a lacrosse style goal! This was called a 'Michigan' goal, and the crowd went wild! That goal sealed the win for the Bulldogs because the Coyotes weren't able to score at all that game. The Bulldogs were amazed - they were off to the finals.

To no one's surprise the Bulldogs were going to face The Warriors, and they haven't lost a game in the tournament in three years!

Soon they were in the dressing room, and ready to start. But Liam was a little nervous. He once played them in the finals a few years ago, and he got hurt and had to spend two days in the hospital, like Charlie. He just hopes that this game goes well.

There were a lot of people watching, including teams that were playing in the tournament, but lost and were put out.

The announcer called out each team, followed by introducing the National anthem. As Liam was calming himself down, he could only hear one thing: blades from the skates cutting through the ice.

“Please rise and doff your hats while we sing, ‘O Canada’.”

As soon as the anthem was done, they got into positions.

Liam stood eye to eye with a Warrior at center ice. As soon as the referee dropped the puck, the Warriors immediately won the face-off and took possession of the puck. The puck went to the defense who quickly passed the puck to a streaking right winger who skated into our end of the ice. He easily deked the defenceman and snapped the puck past our goalie.

“Try to shake it off,” Liam called out to his team.

*Oh no, we’re losing,* thought the Bulldog bench.

The next face off went differently, this time Liam won the face off and passed to Wyatt who was playing right wing. After that Wyatt made an awesome pass back toward Liam and he had a breakaway, and he did the Michigan like in the game before! And he scored! Now it was all tied up. It stayed tied for a long time. In the last period there was a face off, again the Bulldogs won it. Liam makes a pass to Tim on defense. Tim quickly passed it to Ryan, who 1-time passed it to send Liam on a breakaway! Suddenly Liam feels his skates pulled out from underneath him!

“Tripping on a breakaway means a penalty shot,” explained the ref to the benches.

Liam’s heart was pounding as he stood at center ice. This was just like Liam’s dream, but Liam was ready for a different ending. He flew down the ice toward the Warriors net, gaining as much speed as he could. The Warriors goalie began to panic as Liam was rapidly approaching the net! Liam suddenly stopped hard; blowing a cloud of snow and ice toward the goalie’s mask. The puck slid past the Warriors goalie! The clock soon ran out of time and the Warriors were defeated! The Bulldogs bench spilled out onto the ice. Gloves and sticks were thrown up in the air in celebration. The Bulldogs were presented with the Lumley trophy and they carried it around the ice proudly. Finally, the players lined up and shook hands respectfully. This went down as a major highlight in Bulldogs history.

*Junior Poetry – First Place*

THE RIVER

*By: Olivia Bell*

Quick and quiet,  
Racing down  
A mountain side,  
Growing now.

Getting louder,  
Swelling bigger,  
Sweeping down  
With growing vigor.

Flows down into  
Lush green valleys  
Winding to its  
Grand finale.

The ocean now  
Comes into view  
Sparkling colours  
Green and blue.

Flowing there  
And flowing fast  
To the ocean,  
Wide and vast.

Smell the salt  
That's in the air.  
Feel the breeze brush  
Through your hair.

The river flows  
Down to its end.  
Sea and river  
Start to blend.

The river waves  
To say goodbye  
As it stretches  
Toward the sky.

*Junior Poetry – Second Place*

THE NEST

*By: Olivia Bell*

I went hiking with my dog  
And found a little nest  
My dog brought me the mother bird  
So I knew what was best

I wrapped the eggs up in my coat  
All five, still warm and blue  
I brought them home and made a nest  
In my running shoe

I kept the eggs all warm and dry  
And held them over light  
Four of them had beating hearts  
But one was just not right

I raised the eggs until they hatched  
Into little birds  
But that one egg was a song unsung  
And a tune unheard

*Junior Poetry – Third Place*

## BUTTERFLIES TO BATS

*By: Ayla Green*

I used to get butterflies when I saw you  
I used to get butterflies thinking about you  
I used to get butterflies even though I'd see you about a hundred  
times

I used to feel the joy imprisoned  
Encapsulated in my stomach

I USED TO

You reminded me of what butterflies felt like

But

Words were said

And those rare butterflies

Monarchs, even

Had turned to bats

They would twist and turn

And make me nauseous

They would make my heartbeat faster

As fast as their wings sprung around

Scrapping the edges of my stomach with their claws

They would poison my blood

The feeling of betrayal

The hate

And the sadness

That I kept a secret behind my eyes

That secret that used to be those butterflies...

Sometimes even if its fake you can't get over it

Sometimes even if its gossip

You believed it

And that's enough

Well

They aren't butterflies anymore  
They aren't bats  
They are free from the cage of my stomach  
They are not in there anymore  
They have been let back into the wilderness  
To fend for themselves  
Instead of feeding on my insides  
Someone else can have them  
Not me  
They may be lost at sea  
They may have found someone else to nest in  
Someone else to fly around in  
Someone else to be their cage  
Someone else to make her heartbeat as fast as their fast-flapping  
wings  
Someone else to poison  
To intoxicate with their special serum  
Someone else to torture  
With these feelings  
For him

Whoever gets to have my deepest darkest butterflies  
I have one thing to say  
They turn to bats real quick



*Junior Poetry – Honourable Mention*

LIFE OF SHE

*By: Nadine Lorentz-Vanee*

At the age of 12, my life took a turn,  
The pain I endured caused my world to burn,  
I was just a little girl, yet I had to face the eyes of others,  
Their gaze fixated on my chest, hips, and curves, leaving me feeling  
violated and worn,  
The concept of consent was foreign, as it was unnecessary to respect  
my boundaries,  
Their hands touched me in ways that caused me to curl,  
I wanted to hurl, buried in the darkness of this world,  
Then, a glimmer of hope,  
A soul reached out, proving that not everyone was in doubt  
Through the wise words and gaze of a woman named Barfoot, I  
began to realize her worth as a person,  
I understood that it had worsened, but I was a human being  
deserving of respect,  
With this I reflect, I vowed to rise above her and fight for my term,  
I recognized that my body was my own, and I would not allow  
anyone to harm me,  
For I am a human being, with feelings.

*Junior Poetry – Honourable Mention*

TREES

*By: Olivia Bell*

The great pine  
Stands in its place  
In the evergreen forest,  
Tall and neat.

The small sapling  
Sits and waits  
For spring,  
Short and petite.

The graceful maple  
Stays quietly while taps  
And buckets collect sap,  
Clear and sweet.

The colossal oak  
Befriends small birds  
Who sit in its branches  
And chirp and tweet.

The scented cedar  
Stays green and straight  
Through all weather,  
Rain or sleet.

Without trees  
Our world would be  
Empty, strange,  
Incomplete.

*Junior Poetry – Honourable Mention*

**A GROWING GIRL**

*By: Nadine Lorentz-Vanee*

Flowers bloom in the gloom,  
A body grows, just to show,  
Give me a chance and I will go,  
I am a woman with the right,  
all women have the same fight,  
growing more for eyes to explore,  
I do not want to be quiet, but I feel like I'm a giant,  
I'm like a tree in baggy clothes, I will stand tall but no one will know,  
And I promise I will never be slow,  
Or reveal anything above or below,  
I am a person with fears,  
I want to share but they turn into tears,  
Underneath my angel eyes, The devil hides,  
Where the nasty thoughts fly,  
I tend to heal, but my skin scabs and peels,  
Every time this girl cried,  
She finds a way to decide,  
She will stand with her pride

*Junior Poetry – Honourable Mention*

SNOW

*By: Olivia Bell*

The snow is falling down tonight,  
Covering muddy brown with white.  
Forming silver crowns on heads.  
Across the ground the snow is spread.  
Sparkling on the ground and sill  
Covering houses, trees and still  
The snow is falling down.

The snow is falling down tonight,  
Making people merry and bright,  
Whirling through the small town square,  
Giving people snowy hair,  
Children laughing, simply thrilled.  
Snow covers cars and churches, still,  
The snow is falling down.

The snow is falling down tonight.  
It is quite a pretty sight.  
The people are now all in bed,  
But not the snow it is, instead,  
Taking advantage of the chill.  
Snow covers the whole town, and still,  
The snow is falling down.

*Junior Poetry – Honourable Mention*

DROWNING UNDERNEATH THE MONOCHROMATIC NEW  
BEGINNINGS

*By: Ayla Green*

Open wound

Reconsider

Your treasured

Your “new beginnings”

Your black and white ever after

Monochromatic

For painting your own sky

Will make it crumble

“Puzzle pieces aren't fitting”

“The skies are falling!”

So get back to your feet

That's the hardest part

Its slow growth

Crumbling back down

“Get

Back

Up”

Surrender

Find your getaway car

Find the solid ground

My mind is an open wound

It'll bleed leaving me weak and pale

First your ankle deep

Then your knee deep

“Could it get worse”

Waist deep

Shoulder deep

Underwater

Suddenly the sky you painted fades

And the water fills your lungs

Surrounds your heart

And it's finally peaceful

Your heart finds the pulse of the waves

Don't paint your own skies

For you will drown in the water underneath

*Barbara Hehner Memorial Award*  
*Senior Short Story – First Place*  
VERSIFICATION CAFÉ  
*By: Emma Radstake*

I wiped down the counter for the umpteenth time on a drizzly October morning. Working in a café provided me with two joys: One, the ability to make a clean counter even cleaner by wiping it during slow spurts in a day, and two, getting a glimpse of how other people lived their lives. One could call it people watching, or stalking. But it's not that. I'm not creepy, just observant. It let me practice my storytelling, or fictitious versification, as I liked to call it.

The old man who sat in the corner by the window reading his paper. The married couple who sat by the fireplace arguing emphatically. Or take for instance the boys soccer team that came in once a week for hot chocolate. They let me in on a taste of what they did each day. The old man, Al, was eighty-three. Everyday, at nine o'clock, he ordered a large coffee, one cream, two Splenda, and read his paper. He would then go visit his wife in the nursing home. Being that he came daily, meant that the coffee shop was at least one stanza in his life story.

A drunken lawyer. A kindergarten teacher. College students who added one-too-many espresso shots. I thought I had seen it all, been placed in many stanzas, and lived through much fictitious writer's block.

Until I met Byron.

He was tall, lanky, and had creamy-dark skin. He loved to talk, to lyricize. This proved true in our first interaction.

It was a normal Wednesday morning. I was working alone, and it was bright and sunny, meaning the normal drip coffee group wasn't in. Al was still faithfully reading his newspaper by the time Byron walked in. I said my usual spiel.

'Hi. I'm Nadia. What can I get started for you today?'

At this point, any normal person would tell me their order, and that would be that.

'Turn back, o' desperate soul, for shalt I end up before thee?'

I stared at him blankly. 'What does that mean?'

'No idea.' He smirked. 'Say, Nadia, what do you recommend me getting?'

'The coffee here is good, I guess,' I said back.

'You guess? Aren't you supposed to sell me on these sorts of things?'

I smirked. I didn't know if he was joking, or a sales critic.

'That's not my job. Just tell me what you want. I don't make the decisions.'

He pondered what I said for a minute, and then smiled. 'Okay, I got it. Iced chai. Honey instead of sugar. And some whipped cream on top if you can.'

'You don't take me for the iced chai type,' I said. A smile crept onto my face.

'Appearances are deceiving.' He slid me a five-dollar bill, still grinning. 'Keep the change, Nadia.'

That's where it began. He'd come in, every-other day, with the same order, an iced chai latte with honey and whipped topping. He'd order with a smirk on his face, and a random line of poetry. He'd stay in the shop for hours, writing in a notebook, in the same seat Al often sat in. After a few weeks of this routine, I sat myself next to him during my break.

'Hello Nadia,' he said, without looking up.

'What are you writing?'

'I just write,' he replied. 'Poetry, mostly. The world is big enough to lyricize about almost anything.'

'Can I see?' I was curious.

'No, it's for my creative pleasure. One day, Nadia, when it gets published, you can read it.'

We sat in silence for a while as he wrote.

'Tell me about yourself,' he said randomly.

'What do you want to know?' I asked. To ask someone about themselves was like asking to describe their opinion on world



history from the fifth century to present day – it’s hard to know where to start, and how subjective to be.

‘Everything. Who are you? Why are you working in a coffee shop? What’s your story? Everyone’s got one.’

We sat in silence as I thought. Byron seemed genuine; so, I told him. I told him about the stanzas, and the versification, and the storytelling. After I had explained everything, he simply smiled.

‘Versification. I like that word. You’re a pretty cool gal, Nadia.’

For the first time ever, I blushed. ‘You’re pretty cool too, Byron.’

‘I hope I can make two or three of your stanzas, though. Not just one.’

With that, he got up, closed his notebook, and smiled. ‘I’ll see you same time Thursday.’

I nodded.

This practice went on for weeks. It was nice in a way, me in my coffee-stained pants, and him with his iced-chai. In the middle of everything, he would randomly say something poetic, as if he were T.S. Eliot. He’d tell me his aspirations too; how he’d become a publicized poet and travel the world expressing his works. And then, when he had finished his chai, he would leave abruptly, throwing his single-use cup in the garbage and leaving me with a single wink and smirk. He’d leave me in my oversized non-slips and messy work-hair. It felt good, and not out of place. It felt right.

I had started to make his order before he came. He ordered the same thing every time. He would grab it, wink at me, and then go and sit in the same place.

One day, I had prepped his chai right before a rush. A baseball team, the fighting couple, and a few retired construction workers, all moseyed in at the same time. I rang in their orders quite fast. The whole ordeal took me about twenty minutes, and the orders just kept coming. Near the end of the rush, I saw Byron’s chai still sitting there. I picked it up: the ice had melted on the inside and the whipped cream had turned to a puddle of cream infused in his cup. I

left it there for another hour. Two hours. I threw it out after three hours. *He could just be busy*, I thought.

I knew something was up when he didn't show up for about a week. I had eventually concluded that he had moved away or just got bored with me.

The next day, I found his obituary in the paper. I had been cleaning up after Al, and he had forgotten his paper on the table. It was open, and Byron's face was there. *Byron Grimes*.

The tears fell before I could stop them. Byron wasn't dead; he was poetic, lyrical, positive. I pushed past my emotions to continue to read. *Byron James Grimes was involved in a fatal collision October twelfth. Remembered by his mother, Cindy Green, and his siblings, Maria, and Keandra Grimes. A visitation is open to the public at Calvary Church, the twentieth of October.*

I dropped the paper. He had died seven days ago. A full week. Then it hit me; Byron would never be a poet. His poems would never be heard. He would never become the lyricist he wanted to be. I dropped the towel that I was using to wipe the table and ran outside in the pouring rain.

*He can't be. He isn't.*

*He is.*

*He's gone.*

I found myself standing outside of a small wooden church. It had taken me a day to gain composure. I felt out of place; I didn't know his family or friends. He was so real; I never even thought about his backstory. He was too real to fictionize.

"And you are?" A deep feminine voice came from behind me. I turned, and there was Byron. Only it wasn't Byron.

"I'm sorry, I just thought—" I didn't have the words. This girl, who looked to be Byron's sister, looked too much like him.

*'You're a pretty cool gal, Nadia.'*

The tears welled in my eyes.

"You knew him, didn't you?"

I nodded. She cocked her head. "From where?"

I sighed. "I worked at a café—"

"Nadia?"

"Y-yes."

"He talked about you." Her eyes welled up. "He talked about your shop a lot." She wiped her eyes and reached from behind her. "Here." She handed me a book. Byron's book. The poetical masterpiece that was supposed to be read by many. "This is for you."

With that, she wiped her eyes again, and went back into the church. I opened the book, to the first page.

*Nadia,*

*This was always meant for you to read first. Like I promised.  
Before this gets published, and after I finish it, I want you to read it.  
Lemme know what you think.*

- B

I flipped through the pages, reading over each one slowly. I wiped my eyes. Byron was right. He didn't just write a few stanzas in my life. He left full paragraphs, even from our shortest interactions. I smiled reading the poetry, knowing that I was at least a stanza in his life, too.

*Senior Short Story – Second Place*

ROUGH WATERS

*By: Hannah Gainor*

Her heart fluttered as she beheld the dark, looming clouds ahead. They weren't yet above her, but quickly approached. "*Too quickly*" She considered.

Ashley had known harsh weather would dominate the next few days but thought she could manage one last day on the water. Clearly, she'd been wrong. Her parents yelled for her a while back, though she couldn't understand them over the crashing waves. Assuming it was about the encroaching weather, she'd ignored them.

Even now, seeing the menacing weather for herself, she still yearned to push forward. Her kayak cutting through the water like a bird through the air was the closest she'd felt to being free in years; it was what kept her from looking back.

She fought the growing waves, plunging her oars into the water, pushing with all her strength, but each attempt proved futile. Wiping away strands of hair stuck to her forehead, she looked around. Soon the rain began pelting her, the waves becoming more unsettled by the second. Her breathing grew ragged, and she brought a shaking hand to her forehead, trying to catch a glimpse of the sky. There were no gaps revealing sunlight or blue sky through the clouds, it was dark as night for as far as the eye could see. The adrenalin had her frantically trying to formulate a plan. Moreover, there was the little fact that she couldn't swim.

The realization struck her, that her energy needed not to be put towards finding shore but staying afloat.

Rough waters, dark skies, and rain. Pouring, unending rain that drenched her to the bone pelted her in every direction. Digging her compass out of the emergency pouch at her side, she brought it close to her face. It was difficult to read when she was having to continually wipe water off the glass surface.

She took a sudden, sharp breath as a large wave beat against her side. The compass flew from her hands as her body slammed into the water. Desperately she tried to reach up, but the waves were stronger, the weight of them crashing over her, tipping her kayak. Stuck in her kayak under the lake's surface, her mouth filled with

water and her eyes widened with panic as she became completely submerged.

*Walking home was often the only time Ashley had completely to herself. Even when she was home alone, lying on her bed with nothing to do, there was still the feeling that she should be doing something; and she wasn't. Walking was a task she could do easily. No need to worry about tasks she could be completing because she was already doing one.*

*She stepped onto the road, her sneaker sinking ankle-deep in water. At this point she didn't care about her clothes; she was more focused on the schoolwork likely disintegrating in her bag.*

*She froze, hearing screeching tires on the pavement beside her. Her view was blocked by the umbrella, but seeing it wouldn't have changed anything. A sharp gasp was all she managed before the impact sent her flying. Or at least she felt like she was flying. Those few seconds where she couldn't determine up from down were the scariest. What came after was just a quiet calm.*

She threw her body to the side, attempting with all her strength to roll her kayak back over. Her kayak would float, but that still meant she was trapped below the surface of the water. Ashley leaned over to the side, hoping that her life jacket was enough to pull her above, but she needed more force. She threw her arms out repeatedly, and with one final push, she flipped, emerging to the surface.

She slumped over in her seat, gasping for air. Cupping her face in her hands, she savored the cool air around her before she heard the blare of a horn in the distance. She searched for the sound's origin and thought herself so desperate as to imagine it. Then again: the unmistakable sound of a boat horn. Soon she saw lights cutting through the rain in her direction. She waved her arms above her head, screaming for help. The boat cut through the waves and came to a stop beside her, and she quickly grasped a slim rope hanging off the side.

"Need a ride?" She could barely contain her relief. She didn't have the energy to call back, and simply tossed her arms into the air like a toddler. It only took a second before the stranger grasped her hand and pulled her up.

“You ok?” She heard the voice shout and looked up to see a boy, roughly her age, crouching down before her.

Still gasping for air, she pointed out her kayak in the water, but he was already reaching overboard to tie it to the boat.

“I’ll tow it!” he yelled back to her gesturing to his boat.

“Go, just get us out of here!” Her voice was barely audible above the thrashing waves. Closing her eyes, all she could manage was wrapping her hand once more in the rope.

Ashley jolted, feeling someone shake her.

“Uh, did you black out or are you just tired?” her rescuer called to her. Ashley peered up through damp lashes to see the dock around her. “Oh, thank god!” he said, as he clapped a hand over his forehead. His relief at her not-so-untimely death brought a smile to her face.

“Not dead, just tired,” she said, probably the biggest understatement of the year.

He extended another hand out to her. “It should be safe to stand here; all the weather’s blown south, so not likely to send us flying,” he added.

“I can’t,” she said tersely. At his confused stare she added, “Walk, I can’t walk.”

He knelt before her. “Did you hurt your back or something?” he said, assessing her for any obvious injury.

“Yeah, uh,” she spoke finally. “But it was a long time ago,” she added to alleviate his obviously growing concern.

At his silence she found herself babbling more details. “A year ago, I got hit by a car; no feeling below the waist.” Her words were clipped, and she didn’t elaborate further.

“So... I’ll have to carry you, or...?” His playful tone made her thankful.

She laughed. “No, please don’t even attempt it.” He left to pull her kayak out of the water, and she looked around, trying to place her surroundings. Ashley recognized the dock they were at, north of the beach she had started from. Far north.

“I need to call my parents!” she shouted over her shoulder to the boy. Without a response he tossed his phone across the deck to her.

Sitting on the deck beside her kayak she silently handed the phone over to the boy as he approached.

"They didn't sound happy," he prodded.

"Nope, they're not." This drew silence for a few seconds.

"Will," he stated, plopping down beside her as if that were introduction enough.

"Ashley."

"Why were you out on the water in this kind of weather?"

"So were you!" she countered in place of an answer.

"For one, my boat is bigger, and two, I'm stupid. Your excuse?"

She sighed, fixing her gaze on the water. "I can't go nearly as fast or as far on land as I can in the water," she said quietly.

"Have you tried physiotherapy or something?" he replied.

"I'm paralyzed, permanently, no number of surgeries or therapy or even magic will have me running like I used to." This was usually followed by awkward, uneasy silence.

"Well, it worked for me." He shrugged and reached forward to lift his pant leg, revealing a metallic prosthetic where his leg was supposed to be.

Her brows shot up, all the response she could muster before locking her gaze to his. *I told you, you tell me*, she seemed to say. Will sighed.

"Shark attack," he stated solemnly, casting down his gaze.

Ashley burst out laughing. "Oh yeah, the vicious sharks of Lake Huron," she said, rolling her eyes.

A few quiet moments passed before he turned to her. "There were plenty of things I can't do now that I could do before. But it's not about reclaiming those things you *could* do; it's about finding new things that you *can* do."

By sunset, her parents had arrived, and she was forced to part with her new friend.

"Hey, make sure you come back soon, we can go boating with a few of my friends. We're here all summer."

"If my parents ever let me on the water again, I'll be sure to," she yelled out the window as they drove off.

Her parents immediately began lecturing her, but she couldn't help tuning them out, being too giddy with her new friend to listen. She lost many of her friends who didn't want to push a

wheelchair around a mall, constantly looking for ramps. And Ashley didn't blame them, she didn't want to do those things any more than they did, but it still stung. Will's phone number weighed heavily in her pocket, and she felt something she hadn't felt in a long time. Like a breath of fresh air, she felt hopeful.



The sharp smell of curry fills the air. I add some extra spice to the stir fry. I made too much. Again.

I settle back for a moment, leaning against the counter, waiting for dinner to cook. The snow is falling outside, soft white crystals of an early winter burying memories of a mucky autumn, and quickly picking up to a fast flurry. I should probably ready the plough for the tractor sometime soon. Weather forecast was bleak for tonight.

I'd prefer not to be performing any risky manoeuvres on the driveway. The car already suffered enough under Noah's hand.

The house feels so empty. I try not to think of it too much. Try not to look at the pictures on the fridge. Or his initials carved beside mine in the mantelpiece. Or the grooves in the wood where he dropped the sledgehammer. That was a fun day.

Great. Even the stir fry makes me think of him. I keep thinking I have a little boy to feed.

I wipe my eyes. The stir fry keeps sizzling.

I always wanted to be some kind of hero, but he was the only one who made me believe I could be; that building a windowsill with my son, or cooking him his favourite meal, or by ploughing a drive together—that just in doing these little things, I could be a hero.

A knock on the door wakes me from my reverie. *Who is out in this weather?*

Alarmed, I walk over to the door, glancing through the window first. I vaguely glimpse a small figure. *A kid? Like... Trying to sell Girl Guide cookies at this time of year?*

I crack open the door, bewildered and slightly wary.

A boy no older than fourteen stands in front of my door. Hatless, mitless, and arms crossed over a thick coat that is the only admission to the Canadian winter he's standing in. The look of relief that crosses his face is astounding.

I have no idea who this stranger is, but he's not going to stand in my doorway and freeze.

"Odin's beard, what in the *world* are you doing out in this weather?!" I gesture for him to get in. *Who lets their child out without a hat*, thinking again of the winters Noah and I spent together.

The boy opens his mouth to speak. Pauses. "We went into a ditch." His voice is barely audible. Hesitantly, he points down the road. "My Ma is trying to get out, but our cell phone is out of battery and I was wondering if I could call a tow on your..." he shivers, "on your phone. Please?"

I feel my brows raise and glance down the road, seeing some headlights vaguely through the growing storm. "Of course, come in." I open the door wider, slightly flustered at the turn of events. "It's freezing."

I'm already reaching for my coat and hat, and passing Noah's extra coat, mitts and scarf at the boy. They're a bit big.

"Please *do* put them on." Beat. "What's your name, by the way?" I grab the tractor keys.

"Ajay. Ajay Kaur, ma'am. But. Um. Are you..." he trails off, questioning but not meaning to be rude.

"I'll get the car out of the ditch."

His eyes go wide. "You can do that?"

"I've worked a farm, driven a tractor, and raised a son with one hectic idea of fun for nineteen years." I grimace at the memory. "Fear not. I can get a car out of ditch."

The car is completely snowed in. With a few hand signals to the lady by the car and Ajay eagerly hopping down from the tractor to hook it to the car, the car is quickly out of the ditch.

I jump down from the tractor. Ajay comes over and I offer a fist bump.

"Nice work with hooking it up."

He grins, returning the bump. His cheeks are red and there's snow on his lashes, but he no longer looks like he's freezing.

"Watched last time this happened."

I raise an eyebrow. "Good for you. But, eh, I hope you don't have to do it again."

He gestures over to his mom, who I now notice is holding a toddler, a much too large hat balanced on their head and mitts on its hands. I glance at Ajay in Noah's hat and mitts. *No wonder he was cold.*

"Uhh, this is my mom, Naya, and uh, this is Ms...?" he glances at me. I smile at her, holding out my hand.

"Eloise Mcintyre."

"Thank you so, so much." She smiles, holding her child in one arm as she shakes my hand. I appreciate the sort of character it takes to smile even after your car went in a ditch. I smile back, thoughts caught for a moment on the winter night Noah and I spent pulled over on the side of the road.

"I don't know what I would have done otherwise. Can I pay you—"

"No, no, not at all. Glad to be able to help out every once in a while." I glance at the sky, which is only getting worse. "Do you have far to go?"

Naya grimaces slightly, before her smile returns undamped. "We do. Have to get back to Owen Sound."

"That has to be another hour, at least."

Worry returns to her expression. "I know. We were just coming home from a family gathering, else we'd never be out here." She holds her child closer. "We'll just... drive carefully."

"Actually, I have another idea." I smile. "If you wouldn't mind, I have a bit too much dinner at home, and was wondering if you'd be willing to join me?"

Tractor and car parked, I wave the trio inside.

"Make yourselves at home." I gesture at the kitchen table. "I have stir fry if you'd like dinner."

I can see the answer in Ajay before I need to hear any words. Feeding children usually can get them to your side. For good measure, I add, "And there are muffins in the oven, too."

I set the table, Ajay eagerly helping where he can. Maybe it's just me becoming old and sentimental, but he reminds me of Noah. Or maybe it's just the hat.

Naya looks exhausted, but doesn't stop smiling even as we sit down together to eat. It's much more enjoyable than it ever would have been alone, and listening to the three of them brings me back.

"Have you lived here for a long time?"

"Yeah... I lived in town for a while, and then moved out here."

Naya nods, understanding. "You must have a lot to do with a whole farm to keep up."

"Yeah. It's not too bad though. What do you do for work?"

"She's just been accepted as an operator at the Bruce." Ajay beams, pride written on his face. Naya gives her son a mock stern look, but he just beams all the more at her.

I nod, impressed. "Good job. My job before I came here."

"Oh! What prompted the change?"

I smile. "I had a son and... preferred to focus on just working on the farm and with him."

She glances around the house quickly. "You live by yourself here now?"

"Yeah. He left for university this fall." I feel a twinge of sadness still at that.

"You must miss him."

I nod, but then laugh. "But he's the reason I know how to pull cars from ditches."

She laughs with me. I find myself liking her character. She bears herself with intelligence all while holding a toddler and raising a teenager. More than I could say for myself at that time in my life.

The meal finishing, I glance at Ajax. "You play video games?"

He nods. I nod at the video game console in my living room. "Feel free, if you like."

"Really? You sure?"

"Played a lot against my son. But he's not here, so it's all yours."

Naya and I keep talking for some time about careers and kids and life. I haven't had a good conversation like this in a while. Something stirs in me. Warmer than even heavily spiced stir fry. I feel more fulfilled than I have in months. Really, since Noah left.

I feel like I can be a hero. Just by doing the kind, ordinary things.

My phone pings.

"One sec, Naya." I excuse myself quickly, pulling it out of my pocket.

*Messages: Noah Mcintyre*

HEY MOM!!!

I PASSED FIRST SEMESTER OF UNIVERSITY

FINALS!!!

I wouldn't be here without you, mom! My hero still. ;) And miss you every day <3

There's an image of him in front of Waterloo, grinning.

I stare for a moment, holding back tearful laughter. I usually don't cry, happy or sad, but this has been a strange and wonderful evening.

There is more than one way to be a hero.

*Florence Murphy Dabbs Memorial Award*  
*Senior Poetry – First Place*  
THE ONES BEYOND  
*By: Kardin Penner*

Last purple twilight rays through leaves reflect  
The dying sunset off the glossed grey stones  
The beams of flying light do intersect  
The ghosts who are now free from earthly homes

Not vile is this cooling eve'ning air  
That dances nimbly through the maple leaves  
Instead 'tis sweet of silent spirits fair  
Who left behind the ones on Earth who grieve

And as the twilight starts to fade away  
And moon begins to light the darkened graves  
I wonder of the ones who choose to stay  
And wait for those beyond the dirt and waves

We must leave in silent memory  
The ones who were, and think of ones to be.

*Senior Poetry – Second Place*

TO THE RIVER

*By: Kardin Penner*

Of all the places I have been  
And of the waters I have seen  
Oh I had thought I'd seen them all  
But none compare to you, Saugeen

Your tangled twines that wind and turn  
Your rocky reefs that bubbling, churn  
Your sandy banks, a water wall  
They call to me, and make me yearn

Exist there bigger brooks than you  
With deeper depths, I know it's true  
They might be known around the lands  
But know I them, so through and through?

I know what creatures lie in sleep  
Within your murky waters deep  
I know the crayfish and the clams  
And of the gulls that from you eat

I know how summer sunset shines  
Upon your wavy, wondrous lines  
That shimmers like an unknown code  
Upon the trees, cedars and pines.

I know how winter frost affects  
Your bubbling babbling dialects  
I know how ice turns you to road  
For skates to scrawl some dancing texts

And as the snow so softly slides  
In springtime thaw you start to rise  
To overtake the inward plains  
And sweep away the last year's ties

You wind your way from life to life  
You find a path through calm and knife  
To plants which need, you syphon rain  
You relieve those in heat and strife

Through woods and fields you twist and wind  
To birds and beasts a shining sign  
And through the leaves and grasses tall  
I'm reminded that you are mine

So of all the places I have been  
And of the waters I have seen  
Oh, I had thought I'd seen them all  
But none compare to you, Saugeen



Senior Poetry – Third Place

SUCCULENT

By: Aniah Ruthven

You are a succulent.

Twisted and gnarled, **hardened** and low-maintenance.

You **teeter** on the edge of **life** and death, but, at the first drop of water or a mere glimpse of the sun, **bounce back** to full **vibrance** in an incredible stunt of resilience.

The thing about being a succulent?

People assume that you're self-sufficient.

You see, "*green-thumbs*" want a *challenge*. Flowers, vegetables,  
**BANANA PLANTS** —

they want something that *requires* their nurturing capabilities lest it **dwindle** and die.

And you?

You get the rest, dear friend.

The self-proclaimed “not-gardeners”.

The laugh-because-I've-killed-every-plant-I've-ever-had-but-OH-MY-GOSH... *the succulent on my counter is STILL going! Look at that!*

That's you.

Not that you should complain. You're in as good a shape as any other display of **greenery** out there. You just need less to stay that way.

So you get less.

During the small snapshots of time when you're feeling particularly high-maintenance, you prickle with resentment. Sure, you're doing fine – you always are. But what if, just *maybe*, you were given as much attention as the other plants? How **amazing** would you be then?

But that is an absurd question.

You are a succulent.

*Senior Poetry – Honourable Mention*

THE HAND OF THE FOREST

*By: Kardin Penner*

Oh! How my mind is turned around  
With bustling streets and city sounds!  
The way each person is their king  
It breaks me, makes my spirit sting!

Each one a cell in a being:  
Of trade, of money, but no feeling.  
How close our shoulders always rub,  
But none can fathom other's blood.

I yearn for peaceful calm of woods  
Where everyone is understood;  
Each being has a part to play  
And no one needs to fade away;

How I wish for city sounds,  
That drive my head into the ground,  
To be replaced with wind in leaves  
Whisp'ring, wandering through the trees;

How much more could my soul learn  
If I could join that which I yearn!  
So let me go now from this room  
Before I turn it into tomb;

And enter into forest's grasp  
Where I will stay with peace that lasts.

Senior Poetry – Honourable Mention

IS THIS L.O.V.E?

ON THE MUTABILITY OF MEANING

By: Teagan Penner

Is... *this* love?

A moment of passion? A word they just say?

The thought of a moment which just passes away?

Is it love when they wear it like a badge on their sleeve...

As if love is nothing more than something you just achieve?

They “love” their cars, their shoes, their partner and their mother

They “love” their life and their hate and watching others suffer

They “love” rings, their kings, and anything and everything. Don’t  
they?

They love the thrones from which they throw the stones at the souls  
doomed to die alone.

They love. They love these things. Or that’s what they say, don’t they?

How can all these things be shoved under the same umbrella called...  
“love”?

A good old fairy tale romance. Staring at the moon, lost in a trance.

Is... *this* love?

Isn’t love... more? More than a second’s worth of kiss,

More than a flash of starlit bliss?

I’d like to think it... is.

What of honour and loyalty and trust?

What of forgiveness and trials, and failure then fighting on through  
the dust?

Have you seen their “love”, a love which destroys that which might  
rival?

A love which cannot be lost through the sorrow of trial?

Obsession, possession, but never the confession

That these things *can’t* be love.

What is love at this point?

They said they loved their nation so they slaughtered others

their dreams, so they crushed every other  
soul on the way

their lives, so not another soul deserved to  
live.

And in looking at their "love", I looked into the eyes of darkness.  
Because evil does not take the world by storm  
It enters like a whisper which at first feels warm

Saying.

L O V E if it means destruction.

L O V E if it means tearing apart those you hate.

L O V E if that means that everything which doesn't want  
your love is worthless.

The sickly obsession of a want called a need

The blind pursuit of something, in its bones is greed

But they would rather see their "loved" ones bleed

Then feel their love denied. The sort of love which is only felt to fulfil  
one's own desires.

Can the "love" they call a "spark", a "storm", a "fire", a "victory",

Ever compare to the *love* that lasts like stones that have stood for an  
eternity?

The love of hands held against the tides

The love that not even destruction could divide

I've seen this love in the wrinkled hands which hold

Their sons and daughters against the cold.

But are these things love anymore?

Maybe, the darkness has already taken love,

By taking its definition to the multitudes to be torn apart

Till love itself... has no heart.

Senior Poetry – Honourable Mention

WHY IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

By: Teagan Penner

Where to begin... in this **VAST WIDE WORLD?**

Out there? Or somewhere within?

Or maybe it all comes from within?

I love

- L**ittle things, like pebbles and birds and happy smiles
- O**dd things, like colourful socks and **b r o k e n** tiles

**v a s t** things, like galaxies, stars and **mOuNtAiNs** for miles

**E**verything in nature, from the mighty trees

To the mossy stones... To the laughter of streams... To the walks on my own... To the places I've been

It all feels like... home.

God has made it all so

**B E A U T I F U L**

How? Why?

I love the **light** in the sky when sun **b r e a k s** through the clouds

I love seeing the forests and thickets and bushes stand proud

I love *listening* to the wind as it *whispers* its *secrets* and silently *sighs*

I love watching as the green of summer falters, fades and dies

Into the vibrancy of autumn, leaves scattered in the skies.

I love being drenched in the rain

*Crying in the rain, screaming in the rain, laughing in the rain, walking in the rain, standing in the rain, listening to the rain*

*Forgetting my guilt, my stupidity, my shame  
The little things which try to drive me insane.*

Mm.

Sometimes I even forget to *bReAtHe*.

These are the easy things to love. There's no price, no consequence, for mistakes I could make.

These things simply

**A R E.**

They don't think or want a reply, they don't weep and they never ask and they don't cry.

But it is never that simple. *Is it?*

I love so much

**more**

There is so much

**L I F E**

I love seeing the emotion and humanity behind the facts  
How each individual thinks and loves and acts,  
I love seeing people work together for something greater  
Watching them pray together with faith in their Maker  
I love making people laugh, listening to their laughter  
Watching them play games and reverse expectation  
Build up hearts, build their homes, build a nation

I love seeing people do  
Good Honourable Kind Peaceful Noble Loving Unselfish Gentle Generous Meaningful Caring

*things*, for reasons that have

*NO* explanation by the standards of **THIS** World.

Yes. I find it

**BEAUTIFUL**

I can't list them **ALL**, even if I tried. But besides what's in the world are the moments I find *INSIDE*.

I love facing challenges, feeling myself **grOW**

Knowing the things no one else could ever know  
I love succeeding against odds, against chance, against possibility  
The feeling of a well-earned, well-bought victory.

I love when people listen to the things I *n e v e r* thought anyone would care to listen to me say  
I love hearing the things I never thought another soul would share with me, the honour that they—

Would *trust* me.

I love seeing the Spirit move through all this, and tie it together in one grand masterpiece  
That I can never fully understand, but I can still find

**BEAUTIFUL**

*Senior Poetry – Honourable Mention*

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

*By: Teagan Penner*

Captured within the thoughts of my own mind,  
I, heedless, let my life trickle silent by,  
All time shall pass, I let it leave me behind.

The blossoms of spring, up the trellis wind,  
I saw them not, nor the birds in the sky,  
Captured within the thoughts of my own mind.

When summer came, the shining stars aligned,  
I, ignorant, staring down only sighed,  
All time shall pass, I let it leave me behind.

Autumn came with colours refined,  
But I saw not the leaves or birds, was I...  
Captured within the thoughts of my own mind?

Winter in beauty came and declined.  
Time should not stop, however I try,  
All time shall pass, I let it leave me behind.

In my reverie I became blind,  
Did not see what was before my eyes, and I,  
Captured within the thoughts of my own mind,  
Let all time pass, and let it leave me behind.



*Senior Poetry – Honourable Mention*

MEMORIES

*By: Anum Rafisaif*

I wish time would stop moving so I could live as it be  
I wish I could move on without missing every part of my life,  
even if it was misery  
Hearing people talk about how “nice” it is to feel nostalgic  
is unfair,  
knowing that I must find faults in positivity to leave it as it be.  
I wish I could get over things without changing  
my memories of them  
Trying to forget everything because I don’t want to miss it,  
not because it wasn’t important  
Missing life is slowly killing my life.

*Senior Poetry – Honourable Mention*

SOLEMN RESONANCE

*By: Alexandria Mackenzie Boyko*

Beneath the boundless blue of the morning sky,  
A solemn gathering, as life marches by.  
Where heroes stood, their courage ablaze,  
On Remembrance Day we offer our praise.

They marched to the call with valor and might,  
In the darkest of hours, they fought for the light.  
With poppies as emblems, their memories grace,  
In our hearts, their presence we forever embrace.

In the trenches they faced the cold and the rain,  
Amidst the chaos, the heartache, and pain.  
As bugles sound, and tears gently fall,  
We remember they valor, the greatest of all.

In the garden of memories, their spirits remain,  
In the hearts of the living, a perpetual reign.  
The price they paid, the lives they gave,  
For the liberties we cherish, their valor we save.

In this solemn rendition, we'll never let fade,  
The fallen heroes, they legacy's cascade.  
On Remembrance Day, we'll remember the cost,  
Of a world that's been won, but not without lost.