

Emma Rugolo

Grade 9

St. Ann's Academy

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### Revenge

The peaked-roof house was conspicuously quiet, yet the haunting screams from the husband and wife flooded through the walls. From now on, it would only be the husband, for he had horrifically murdered his wife. His motives were not resentment or animosity. She was just causing him problems, something he couldn't afford right now. Ever since high school, Betty was someone he knew well enough to be certain that she wouldn't quit chasing him and his lies. She would continue to probe further into his life, exposing his illicit treachery and the affairs with his mistress, Camilla, gossiping to her scathing friend, Alison, until they were both six feet under. John concluded: better one than both.

The murder was not premeditated; John acted rashly and impulsively. He hoped to arrive home and drift into sleep, without addressing *her*—not even a simple goodnight. But a chain of events led to John committing a macabre crime, and he was now responsible to dispose of a body—his wife's body.

He stripped Betty of her valuable jewelry, removing her ring and gold studs that he had gifted to her for their anniversary years ago. This body was once the love of his life, or so he thought until he met Camilla. In the fresh laundry bin sat a pretty flowered bed sheet. He wrapped it around Betty's torso in one motion, but he needed additional coverage; it wasn't sufficient. John scavenged in the drawer until he discovered an extra sheet, this time a solid navy colour, which he wrapped tightly around her. He dragged her outdoors; she was a dainty lightweight woman and was in no way an impediment. John hauled the body out into the gloomy night sky, indicating a thunderous storm was approaching. With one final inspection, he

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cautiously placed her in the cargo bed of his pickup truck. He maneuvered his vehicle out of the driveway and into the street, leaving no evidence behind, and headed into the deep forests.

The rural town of Baker Ridge was softly slumbering as John drove for several minutes, leisurely tapping his fingers along the steering wheel while the radio played "Used To Love Her" by Guns N' Roses. He felt an eager shiver run down his spine as the listening trees came into view, their tall branches waving over him. There was just enough space between the trees for the truck to proceed in for a while, but the trees thickened ahead and the terrain became too rough to enter further.

John turned off the engine, gathered his equipment, and hauled his wife's body deep into the woods. Using a shovel, he dug a broad hole several feet away from his truck, large enough for a man to squeeze in, and momentarily paused to admire his work. He threw the body into the hole and evenly distributed a container full of fuel over it, then took a step back, struck a match, and tossed it on the body.

The harsh light of the fire overcame the obscurity of the forest as it raged and withered Betty's body to nothing but ashes, while her husband calmly observed until the fire diminished, leaving nothing but a deeply charred grave surging with the soul of the woman he once loved.

John successfully concealed his crime by covering the hole with heavy dirt, guaranteeing that it would never be found. He gathered his tools, hopped in his truck, and drove back into town as if nothing had happened.

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Alison's vehicle slid into Bibbs' parking lot the next Friday, accompanied by a passenger. Gracie, Betty's sister, would occasionally join their weekly dinners. The two women sat at their usual table and patiently awaited Betty's arrival.

Thirty minutes had gone by inexorably.

"Where's Betty?" Alison asked while chatting with Gracie and snacking on the complimentary bread. "She's never late for dinner. Friday night at Bibb's like normal."

Gracie reassured her as she searched for her phone, "Wait, let me call her and see if she's sitting this one out. Have you spoken to her recently?"

"Last week," Alison replied. "I dropped her off after dinner. She was a little on edge and wasn't sure how to confront John. She claimed that she has been losing sleep lately because of his behavior and her suspicion of infidelity."

Gracie's eyebrows furrowed while her phone pressed up against her ear, continuously ringing that obnoxious ringtone. Alison had never been a fan of John. Ever since high school, he has always given off bad vibes. Despite Gracie's two attempts to call Betty, her phone was unresponsive. She called once more.

"Nope," Gracie answered while holding a somber gaze on her phone. "Still unavailable."

"Well, she wasn't at work today," Alison remarked. "Or the day before. I didn't give it much thought. It is out of character for her not to notify us before taking a leave." The hairs on the back of her neck stood up. "What if something happened? We haven't heard from her in a while." She took a tentative sip from her water glass as her head buzzed with endless possibilities.

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"Hey, let's not jump to conclusions," Gracie reassured. "The poor phone signal suggests that she could simply be out of town." Gracie recognized Alison's pallid complexion. "But she always lets me know before she leaves town," Alison exclaimed.

A sense of foreboding pervaded the atmosphere, and no one dared to express their anguish. It wasn't necessary; their eerie looks made it easy to decipher.

Gracie broke the silence, "What if something *did* happen? What if John harmed her somehow? It would explain his strange behavior."

A cheerful waiter approached to collect their orders just then, completely unaware of the terrifying predicament the two were now in. "What are the ladies interested in having this fine day?" he smiled brightly as he greeted his favourite regulars. Unspoken words hung heavily between Alison and Gracie.

However, today's dish would be best served cold. And the ladies both wanted the same thing: revenge.

### Perspective

It would be a strange sight, if there were anyone to witness it. The wind ripples gently through the still calm, the likes of which only a graveyard could possibly exude. The entrance of the derelict cemetery is temporarily obscured by a limousine, glowing a glossy black in the softly flickering light of the street lamps.

A diaphanous figure slips from the vehicle, waving the driver away. With a crunch of loose gravel and a splash of mud, the limousine is gone. The figure waits until the tail lights, two ever-shrinking red dots, are no more noticeable than the dull radiance of the moon.

Slowly the silhouette picks its way around potholes in the path, steps through the gate, and enters the cemetery. Producing a flashlight from some hidden place, the figure begins to scan the tombstones, searching.

With this shift in light, the figure is rendered partially visible. A middle aged man, face subdued from years of diplomacy. Contrasting his visage are his shoulders, tense, as if held aloft by an unaccomplished puppet master.

At last, his eyes alight upon their desired destination. He weaves through the ornate gravestones, planting his highly polished shoes before a headstone whose practical markings pale in comparison. However, it is not simply the grave or its owner that seem to occupy his mind, but the ancient sycamore tree that looms overhead.

He approaches the tree, hesitance visible in his gait, until he is able to reach out and brush its tough outer shell.

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The man extinguishes his flashlight and is once again masked in darkness. He circles the tree slowly, extending a hand to explore every detail of its marred surface. He sinks to the ground, seemingly oblivious to the dirt coating his expensive suit.

In his mind's eye, he sees himself as a recently orphaned boy, witnessing a funeral from behind this very tree. Tears roll down his youthful face, staining the soil, his pain absorbed by the mature tree.

Time after time since, he has come to this natural, silent being for comfort. In some way, the sage sycamore has slowly filled the gap in his world that was formed when his parents passed on. His attachment to this tree is binding. The enduring presence has guided him through grief, pain, and uncertainty.

Memories begin to trickle in, dusty in their disuse, until, after years worth of recollections, his consciousness returns to this very morning.

In his office, and with no pressing matters to attend to, he had a coffee and began flipping through the day's paper. Everything was pleasantly uneventful until he was promptly jolted from his peaceful state by the news headline: "Dilapidated Graveyard to be Repurposed for Commercial Development."

It shouldn't be disturbing him to this extent. He ventures here a few times a year, on the anniversary of his parents' deaths, and when he is in need of solace. Their graves will be respectfully moved, not destroyed. This he can accept. What he is having a hard time accepting, however, is the thing that *will* be destroyed. The one that now towers over him, a swaying mass of variegated green.

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Perspective  
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Time moves on around him. Even the wind swirls on without a care, prickling his exposed neck before reaching out to gently rustle the leaves of the sycamore tree.

Nature, he thinks, clenching his fists, cannot simply be pressed into scrapbooks. We should not have the luxury of weeding out the seemingly insignificant species while preserving the impactful ones at all costs.

Perhaps, he ponders, he could take advantage of this human tendency and save the sycamore and its neighboring trees, as a result. If word were to be spread that this tree is significantly older than the vast majority of its species; there may be an outcry over the careless butchering of a prized deciduous tree. There could be petitions circulating, the preservation of this special specimen deemed infinitely more important than the construction of yet another commercial facility.

His beloved tree put down its first roots nearly 200 years ago. Its aged presence is calming, and its long lifespan has a way of putting the struggles of everyday life into perspective. There is something special worth saving here, not merely a mediocre tree keeping watch over the long neglected burial ground.

Reluctantly, the man tugs at his sleeve. His watch gazes back at him, informing him of the late hour. He should be going. He has matters to attend to, important ones. The significance of which will continue to resonate for a long time. He admonishingly reminds himself that ruminating over this tree will do nothing to alleviate his consternation over its imminent destruction. Certainly he may more effectively attempt to counteract its demolition the moment he returns home. He has resources and connections there; surely something can be done.

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The presence of these thoughts does little to chip away at his discontent. He does not want to leave. Leaving is resigning himself to the current reality of this tree's fate, and that is an unsavory prospect. He could stay, he thinks, waiting until the end or until he convinces this neighborhood of his cause. He does not wish to depart this place; he knows that if he is unsuccessful he may never set eyes on the sycamore again.

Yet as time pulses slowly on, he must face the truth. He does not belong to his childhood community anymore. He cannot prevent this graveyard's destruction from here. The community whose individuals support one another no longer wishes to assist him. The life he has built for himself and the privileges he has earned have made him an outsider to them. No, he certainly will not be able to sway the citizens of this small town. And so he goes. He gathers himself, and with a promise to return, he exits through the gate, a newfound sense of purpose energizing him as he strolls briskly to the sidewalk and summons his limousine.



Libby Tucker Grade 9, Valleyview Secondary A Perfect Storm

It feels as though time has slowed for me, though maybe it's my heart racing, filled to the brim with adrenaline. The wolves are following me. They're smelling my fear and pushing me to my limits.

The ground is slippery with new mud as a heavy shower rains from the sky. Everything I see is dark, damp, and colourless. I spin around searching in the leafy cover for my pursuers. They stand on a low rock that's been covered in moss and dew, menacing eyes flashing in the near pitch black. Their muzzles dripping with saliva, falling down into the underbrush; fur standing on end, crackling with the electricity of this night. Wolves are mighty creatures to be fighting alone, especially if you're outnumbered and in the middle of a thunderstorm, as I am. They are creatures of the night and the hunt, completely in their element.

I brush a damp lock of hair off of my forehead as I survey my surroundings. There are four wolves prowling towards me slowly, the trees are looming overhead and the mud is sucking the soles of my leather boots into the ground. Fatigue is wearing on me; if I don't do something soon I will be nought but bones by the morning light. I can only think of one plan, but it is foolish. I snap out the rough bone handle of my hunting knife, feeling the cold bite of steel as I sink my palm into the outermost edge, drawing a trickle of crimson blood that rivulets down my wrist along with the rain water. It mixes into the thick mud, swirling with the colours of autumn leaves. I call out to the sky in silent prayer as the hunters slink closer. The wind is whipping the water from the leaves into my eyes, but if I close them, I will probably die a fool's death. That is better than being a meal whilst your back is turned from cowardice, however.

There's the ripping growls of an impatient predator, then it pounces, and its hot breath is in my face. It reeks of death and the decay of previous feasts this creature has indulged in, but I will not let myself be one of them. I cast out my knife's tip, plunging it into the monster's underbelly as it snarls in my ears. The hot blood of my would-be killer gushing out of its stomach. The chase is over for it as it whines in agony, writhing on the ground in front of me. I feel sick, but being sick is better than being dead and I ready my knife yet again for more attacks. The wolves eye me carefully, sticking low to the ground and skulking around my peripheral vision. The rain is bouncing off of their slick pelts as they turn their heads up to the sky, howling in grief and rage. And yet, they begin to creep into the dark of the night, eyes full of defeat, and the shadows cover them once more as they leave.

I pick myself up from the ground and stare at the sky with my head tilted back towards the raging clouds. Water dribbles down my nose and mouth as I feel suffocatingly empty. I pull my blade out of the wolf's dead carcass and scrape it on a nearby tree, hearing the crisp sound of bark breaking as I clean my knife. I stare into the depths of its cold steel and a stranger stares back at me. She is dangerous, I can see it in her gaze. Her skin is as bronze as copper and her hair is dark as the night. Her hardened eyes are as grey as an untamed tempest and her clothes are drenched in blood. The finely woven tunic around her body is torn, tattered, and muddy.

I refuse to believe her and I are one and the same.

Libby Tucker Grade 9, Valleyview Secondary A Perfect Storm

I slip my knife back into its sheath, wincing at the whistling sound it makes and continue down the barely visible trail towards the river.

The way is slick with mud and debris from the storm, and it's hard to keep my footing. The rain is coming down in a light drizzle now and the sounds for night are emerging. The chirping of locusts and cicadas in the dark are a great distraction from the blood spilled earlier. I push through the leafy willow branches guarding the rushing river I have to get across. The current is flowing fast and strong. Water striders are struggling to stay on the rippling surface as the waves thrash around. The sky is light grey and the air is cold. The sun is coming up over the horizon and the rain has gone from pouring to trickling, yet it is still moist and the atmosphere is crackling from leftover lightning.

A lone tree bends over the river, it is long and stark against the unfriendly skies. It looks as though a gust of wind can blow it over; however it still stands proud and arrogant, as if scoffing at mother nature's attempts to keep it from growing. Lone pieces of driftwood are scattered on the bank of dirt I'm standing on. I climb up the steep walls of mud towards the lonely willow over the water. It's slippery and roughly shaped; covered in rocks eroded by the weather. I scramble up the side of the bank, gathering dirt under my nails and scraping my skin against the jagged stones. I pull myself over the ledge and breathe a deep sigh before beginning to scale the large willow. Eventually I make it to the top and stand on the wide trunk as I gaze over the stormy landscape. My decision is made. I jump, hoping the wind will catch me on the other side of the river, in the end of a perfect storm.

Sophie Leadley  
Grade 9  
Sahali Secondary  
All Sticks and Stones

## All Sticks and Stones

It was stupid. So stupid in fact, that we could have died. I don't even know what we were arguing about that caused him to say "let's settle this." And you really don't think that someone's first thought would be to have a race in extremely expensive fancy sports cars. But that's Nick for you, the king of stupid decisions.

I stood in front of a bright green car. Soap falling from the hood to the ground, dripping down the driveway to the curbside. I watch silently as the water traveling to the sewers turns beautifully rainbow.

"Are you sure this is how you wanna spend your Saturday?" Alex asks, I only shrug. I hold the hose to the hood of my car, watching more soapy water drip. "It's such a stupid idea."

"I know." I say, grabbing the towel from around my neck. "It's better than whatever you're doing all day."

"What, I thought you liked bingeing shows with me" He lays back in the lawn chair with a feigned pout and a chuckle. "As long as you don't get hurt." I only nod in agreement.

"I'll be careful." I smile gently

Sophie Leadley  
Grade 9  
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Nick leans on his car, I lean on mine, he's smirking and I'm rolling my eyes. People start to arrive in stands, I don't even know them. All I can really hope at this point is that no one calls the police.

A brunet boy arrives holding two checkered flags in one hand. He wore a t-shirt and shorts to compensate for the sun which he stood awkwardly in. He covered his eyes from the blaring sun

"Well, come on now, we don't have all day." He says, tugging at the handle of his car.

I mock his speech under my breath, opening the door too. My eyes land on the steering wheel first. It's smooth and soft, it's beautiful and I better not mess this car up.

My hands lay still atop the steering wheel. My fingertips tense around it with a taut red tone, tightening as the tension between Nick and I grew. I was ready to just get this over with and I really wish I wasn't the one in this situation.

"Good luck!" Nick teases with a slack tone, just making my hands tighten around the wheel more and more, tension still continuously rising between us. One thing on both our minds, winning.

Sophie Leadley  
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Sahali Secondary  
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“Thanks,” I muttered between gritted teeth, leaving a roughness in my throat, “you too.”

There was no emotion but it still earned a smug smirk from Nick.

I rolled my window up, revving up my engine. My breath was ragged and fast, a mess spread out unevenly between each time his hands would tighten around the wheel again. And it was loud enough to cover the low rumble and hum of his engine and loud enough to block out the rest of Nick’s taunting words stuck in the back of his mind.

The brunet walked out in front of their cars and onto the side of the dirt tracks with the rest of the bystanders. He still held the two small checkered flags tightly in one hand. He still stood awkwardly but didn’t hold his hand in front of the sun, instead he exchanged it for one of the flags.

He enthusiastically jumped in the air and raised the two flags above his head, about to lower them at any moment.. “Are you ready!” With my foot shaking above the gas pedal I manage a smirk in Nick’s direction, as if I were not absolutely nervous. “3! 2! 1!” The brunet waves his flags down once and both of us were speeding down the dirt.

My hands pressed roughly into the wheel and my feet pressed directly on the gas pedal. I knew that I was going to win, I just knew it. I knew it looking back at Nick's orange car, looking back at the brunet waving his flags and jumping frantically.

Sophie Leadley  
Grade 9  
Sahali Secondary  
All Sticks and Stones

As the distance between us grew larger and larger I became far more confident. I think that adrenaline has taken its toll on my body. My foot felt heavier on the pedal, rougher on the wheel. I curve around corners just barely missing barriers to the left of me.

I watch as people gasp and scream and boo and cheer. It was all just exhilarating, especially when I looked back and Nick was getting closer. I press down with full force, my head hits the seat, despite it already being rested.

On the second lap I roll my windows down. Wind against my helmet and matted down hair. It feels amazing because I know Nick's still behind me and he's not catching up again anytime soon.

I hear a screeching noise and in my mirror I see Nick slow down. People scream and gasp, but not in a good way this time. But who was I to pass up the chance to win? It was so close and I could just see the sour look on Nick's face.

My foot presses on the pedal, the screeching gets louder until it's all I can hear. My ears start to ring, people gasp and run. Nick is fully stopped, he's getting out of his car but I'm too close to stop now.

Sophie Leadley  
Grade 9  
Sahali Secondary  
All Sticks and Stones

Suddenly I feel nothing but the steering wheel against my chest. My ears ring louder, everything goes blurry. There's a deafening silence, nobody speaks, nobody gasps or screams.

Sirens start filling the silent void, I don't see anything, I don't feel anything. But I taste something hidden with metallic dripping in my mouth. I can hear Nick's voice beside my car.

"This is going to be expensive." He says. I laugh a little under my ragged breath.

Danika Mahoney

Grade 9

St. Ann's Academy

Listen to Me

Take that jump, learn that song

Go to school, make new friends

Get out of bed, make something

Anything. Please

Just do not waste your life away

*What?*

Do not waste your life

Time; a forever hourglass. The sand falls

The earth spins, turns, moves on without you.

*Are you leaving?*

Do not waste a breath

All air circling though your lungs was made for a reason

Find it before you take your last

*Why? Why this? Why now?*

One day it will all end

One day when wishing for lost time, lost words will be futile

Wishing for moments slipping through wilted fingers

So please, listen to me.



Danika Mahoney

Grade 9

St. Ann's Academy

We All Find Out, Some Faster than Others

Death is not always a cold, unforgiving farewell

Death can be surrounded by loved ones

Begging at unopening eyes

Begging for one more second

Death can be a final release

One last sunset atop a city blinking with lights and sorry eyes staring

Death can be alone sitting on the edge of a world never to know

A world that never knew enough to save you.

Sitting on the edge hoping, wishing, for someone, anyone to stop you.

Someone to hold you as if you were made of cracked glass

Threatening to shatter at a moments notice

Thoughts screaming, Where? When? How?

I'm afraid the answer is beneath you

I'm afraid only you can answer

I'm afraid of the moment you decide to find out

Samantha Douglas

Grade 9

Westsyde Secondary

The Spell of Sleep & I Hate You

The Spell of Sleep

Sleep,  
Don't sleep,  
We are told that sleepin isn't good,  
Causes depression and loneliness,  
We are told sleeping helps cure physical pain,  
What about the emotional pain?  
We are told to deal with it,  
"Get over it,"  
"Stop being dramatic,"  
We are told to get help,  
"You're not ok, get help,"  
"Do you need help,"  
There's no peace,  
There's no "oh I just had bad"  
Because everything needs to have a reason?  
There's no balance,  
But when we do have a good day,  
We're happy,  
Something always has to happen,  
"Oh you're finally happy, what happened,"  
Can we not have peace?  
They ask us why we sleep so much  
We sleep to drain out the world,  
To find the peace and balance that we deserve.

Samantha Douglas

Grade 9

Westsyde Secondary

The Spell of Sleep & I Hate You

I hate you.

I hate that you made me feel like I was worth something to you,  
I hate that you made me think we could be something,  
I hate that every time we made eye-contact I would blush and turn away,  
I hate that every little comment you gave me made my day,  
I hate that you would text me morning and goodnight,  
I hate that you used me,  
I hate that you said you cared when you didn't,  
I hate that all along you were looking at her,  
I hate that you made me believe I had found my person,  
I hate that you left with no warning,  
I hate that I kept asking myself why she was better,  
I hate that my life was a little brighter with you in it,  
But most of all I hate that you made me fall in love with you,  
But I don't hate you,  
I miss you.

Buzz Off, Bruce

Hi, my name is Jessie Wilson, I'm seventeen years old and I can fly. I've been able to ever since I was three. I was helping my mom pick apples and I jumped up to reach one and I sort of hovered there for a second or two and fell. I don't know why I can fly. My mom says that it's because the Gods blessed me with this power, but I'm not so sure. My best friend, Abby also knows and she insists that I can fly because I need some way to escape my over protective mom. Anyway, I'm more concerned with getting through high school without alerting the world of my strange abilities.

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I wake up to the sound of my mom banging around the kitchen. I swear she slams every frickin' cupboard door in this place. I roll out of bed and pull on my cleanest pair of jean shorts. I walk over to my closet and rifle through a few tops until I find my favorite shirt. I check quickly in the mirror and head downstairs for breakfast.

"Morning sweetheart." Mom says, smiling, "How are you feeling about your first day of grade nine?"

"Meh," I say, uninterested. "I'm not looking forward to math but me and Abby were chatting and it sounds like we have most of the same classes, so that's good."

"Well that's alright then," says Mom checking her watch. "You had better get going"

"Oh ya!" I exclaim checking my own watch, I grab my bag and head to school. I meet Abby at the door and we head inside. We don't have first block together but we agree to meet at our lockers before second block. I drift through the first class; it's always dull without Abby. We meet up for second block. We both have Science with Mr. Hilago, the best teacher ever. We have a fun second class and the third is just the same, only we have English with Mrs. Prior. After English we walk down the hallway towards the gym wing.

"Which teacher do we have?" I say thoughtfully pulling my schedule out.

"Mr. Lera, I think," Abby groans.

"Yep," I say, double checking the schedule.

I loop my arm through hers and we make our way to the gym to face Mr. Lera. We get to the gym and sit on the bleachers. Gym is one of the hardest classes for me, and not because I'm not athletic. I love running, but when it comes to being active it's hard to keep my feet on the ground, literally.

Mr. Lera has no mercy when it comes to the first day back. There's no, oh here's some expectations, or, we'll go through a couple of things, and get more into it tomorrow. It's more like, here are the teams today and we'll start with dodgeball.

I get lucky and Abby is on my team. I have pretty good aim so I start taking out the other team, but just then someone throws at me and I have to jump to avoid being hit and for a split second I hang there in mid-air but remind myself to get down, I look around to make sure no one saw.

Abby comes over and says, "I don't think anyone saw, you should be okay"

"But you saw," I say, beginning to panic.

"Only because I was looking for it specifically" says Abby trying to calm me down.

"I need to leave before it happens again!" I say, really panicking now.

"No," argues Abby, "If you leave now it might confirm whatever people think they might've seen. Just act normally and people will write off any suspicions as figments of their imaginations."

I decide that Abby is right and finish the rest of the class on high alert. After class I head outside about to leave, and notice a few people staring at me, but I'm probably just paranoid. I keep telling myself it's just paranoia. That is until one boy, Bruce Towne, walks up to me while I'm just stepping out into the parking lot. This isn't good, Bruce has a habit of accusing people of outrageous things, so if anyone had figured it out it would be him.

"Can you like, fly or something?" he asks in a half joking tone.

"What? No, people can't fly Bruce" I say rolling my eyes in the most convincing way possible.

"You can fly!" Bruce exclaims with a gasp.

By this point everyone within earshot has their eyes on me, and Bruce is not a very quiet person.

"No! Bruce, this is just another one of your absurd accusations." I say maybe a little too defensively.

"I don't think so," says Bruce in a mockingly thoughtful tone. "I think you can fly."

"Buzz off Bruce" Abby says coming to my defense.

"That right there is proof!" Bruce shouts.

I decide that I can't take anymore of this and all but sprint out of the parking lot, Abby right on my heels. We run all the way back to my house.

"What am I going to do!" I shout into the trees behind my house, letting some of my frustration out.

"Ta-ke.. a few... breaths," Abby says, panting "We will figure this out."

"Okay so, my secret is out." I say thinking out loud. "But how bad can that be? I'll just lay low tonight and hopefully when I come back tomorrow no one will have believed Bruce.

But how naive I was. When I get to school the next day everyone knows. Multiple people ask me to show them how I can fly, and some of the rumors circulating are wild. Some say that flying is not the only thing I can do, and there are many more theories.

I know there is nothing I can do so I just ignore everyone and keep my head down.

Leila Thinom  
Westsyde Secondary School  
Grade 9

## Best Friend

I spent years looking for the right friend  
I had friends before, but I never could find that best friend everyone wants  
Until you came into my life  
You showed me light  
You showed me how to see the best in people, including myself  
We did everything together  
So why did you do it  
Why did you hurt me and make me feel so empty  
The feeling of sadness whenever I see you just kills me  
We were best friends only months ago  
We did life together  
Until one day the light inside you died, and the darkness starting to bloom  
The darkness overwhelmed your body and soul  
It ruined everything  
I thought you were my best friend  
Maybe things will change in the future  
The darkness will release you and you will come back to me  
Please come back to me, my best friend

What am I?

I have eyes.

What am I?

I can multiply.

What am I?

I can feed anything.

What am I?

I am firm and dull.

What am I?

I can emerge in groups.

What am I?

I can be poisonous.

What am I?

I can be multiple colours.

What am I?

I have been around for 8000 years.

What am I?

I can be skinned alive.

What am I?

I provide nutrition.

What am I?

I can be chopped, cubed, sliced, shredded, and mashed.

What. Am. I?

A severed, iridescent thread tumbled onto a rocky hillside. Colours cascaded outwards along the ground at its landing, revealing a shimmering web, and a darkened plain in its wake. It was as if the earth was fog on a mirror, and the thread had wiped it clean. The thread which then embedded itself along the other strands, fusing back as if it'd never left, and it barely had.

*Mortals only lived so long, their souls never ventured far.*

The reaper sheathed their blade, flicking their tail along the soil, sending up a cloud of dust, and dissipating the image of the weaving of lives which tangled themselves into a mass of those who had passed, and those who had yet to begin.

With the image gone, the reaper moved on. Leaving behind the soul's dead vessel, in search of another thread to cut loose.

Contrary to popular belief, souls never died on their own. They simply could not. The strings which attached them to life were too strong to fully sever by mundane means. It took a reaper to cut them loose. To bring them home.

As was the job of a dragon.

The dragons of myths were known to hoard that which shimmers and shines. Gold that glints, and glitters. Jewels strung across draping necklaces, or embedded in a king's stolen crown.

Real dragons, however, hoarded the dead. Real dragons collected the web's severed strands. Real dragons are what the mortals all fear.

And so Rethris wandered, in search of their hoard.



Teryn soared, wing tips stretched out to the clouds which rolled over the horizon. The sun shone on her scales as the familiar howl of the breeze filled her ears.

This is what she'd missed out on so long ago. Experiences and sights she never got to truly see. Beauties overlooked in favour of distraction. She'd been too caught up in the work of those who dealt with the dead, to deal with the experiences of the life which was her own.

So when death beckoned her, a chuckle bubbled up from her throat as she soared ever higher. Though, her wings twitched as she fumbled ever so slightly at the creeping whispers.

No matter what, it couldn't have her soul. That much she'd decided.

A new venture had begun. With their previous list complete, Rethris sought out another assignment of new souls to free with a glinting blade. Only, this time, their list was simply a name long. *Teryn*, the parchment read out in bold writing as Death's echoing voice whispered in their mind.

"Teryn is one of your kind, a reaper. She, however, has been ignoring my whispers. She left fate to its own devices, she betrayed us. Bring her thread to me. This is your only job until it's done. Do it quickly." Death instructed.

Rethris only nodded, pulling their hood over their head, and strapping her scythe over their shoulders. Her nose scrunched up as she walked away, disgust evident on their features.

What was a dragon without their purpose? What could one possibly have to gain by leaving death? By betraying it as a concept? Whatever foolishness brought on that decision, was the stupidity that was going to be the end of this dragon.

Oh scales- oh no. Teryn dove behind a mass of boulders and bushes. The forest stilled at the heavy steps of a dragon, a *reaper*. Steps which echoed throughout the woods, and shook her to her core.

The only sound bold enough to carry on was the rustling of leaves as a breeze traveled throughout the woods. It swayed the green branches of deciduous trees, dropping beads of water from soaked leaves to the ground below.

Her heart thumped in chest, her breath held as a reaper scanned the greenery. Their footsteps thumped against the earth, leaves and twigs alike crunched under their talons as they moved swiftly, *deliberately* through the woods.

The reaper paused, tilting their head against the forest's natural breeze to sniff the air. they found what they were looking for.

The reaper's head snapped in her direction. Instantly their talons were moving, thudding against the forest floor, moving *directly* towards their target.

In a heartbeat, Teryn was on the move, booking it in the opposite direction. Heart pounding as she heaved for breath.

A massive weight slammed into Teryn's side, causing her to skid across the earth beneath her. Stones and tree roots scraped painfully against her side as she desperately tried to land a hit on her assailant.

Her efforts were brought to a halt by something cold and sharp being pressed into her neck. A drop of blood dripped down her scales as her breathing became rapid.

"Why?" the reaper questioned harshly.

"Why what?" Teryn breathed.

"You betrayed death, I want to know why. Spill."

"Why do *you* care?"

"Because it doesn't make sense. You left your one purpose. Why?"

Teryn snorted, "Purpose? To serve death is to hardly live a life, it's no *purpose*."

"But it is. That's the whole point of dragon kind, is it not? The world doesn't run without us. Why leave?"

An idea crossed Teryn's mind. A last ditch effort, perhaps.

"What if I show you?"

The reaper gave a puzzled look.

"I'll cut you a deal." Teryn offered. "You get that blade off my neck, and I'll show you what it *really* means to live."

"I'm not leaving death" the reaper scoffed. "Nor am I joining *you*."

"I'm not asking you too," Teryn assured. "All I ask is that you let me give you the answers you seek. After that, you can go back to your reaper work for the rest of *time* if you wish."

The reaper gave a skeptical look, curiosity, however, was evident on their features. Hesitantly, the reaper nodded, and the blade was released from Teryn's throat.

"Fine, I'll let you show me this "life" you find so enticing."

## Eric

“Do you want to tell me what brings you here today Rebecca?”

I looked up. I was pretty sure she had detailed files about ‘why I was here’, I mean she was the therapist. I turned to the wall; she didn’t have big bright inspiring quotes hanging in frames on the wall like the school counselors did. Instead, she hung her degrees from university on her dark gray walls. She had a large industrial looking bookshelf on the left wall, where she proudly displayed her collection of self help books.

“Rebecca, this is court mandated therapy, I can’t help you if you don’t talk to me.” She sighed. “You don’t have to talk about the incident yet, just tell me when you started feeling the way your feeling”

*Fine. I thought. Might as well.*

“I don’t even know where to start” I said

“Start wherever you want”

I guess I should start with my family. I was born in 2005 in Atlanta, Georgia. When I was a baby we moved to Utica, New York. I don’t even remember a time when my parents weren’t fighting. They fought about everything: money, jobs, houses, paint choices, dinners. Everything. We had good money and we had a pretty big house. We had a modern two floored house in a nice neighborhood. My mom was a realtor and my dad was a lawyer. After

their inevitable divorce, mom quit her job and demanded money from dad to pay the mortgage and things that he, apparently, owed her.

My dad moved to Manhattan and I only saw him on holidays after that. I was popular in school too. I had decent grades and lots of friends. All this was before I met Eric. I'm not really sure why he caught my eye. He was relatively attractive, he wore a hoodie and black cargo pants most of the time, he had black hair that was a little too long in the back and he had green eyes. My friends, of course, didn't approve; they all thought he was weird and that he was just some stoner who would either move schools or get expelled soon.

Then my 17th birthday came around. I was going to have a party at my house because my mom was out of town. I just wanted my main friend group to be there but they decided to invite more people. And they decided to bring booze. I didn't drink and I actually hated the taste of beer. But that night I decided that I would choke back a couple of beers. Anyway later in the night I threw up on one of my friends. She was mortified, obviously, and everyone left. The next day, they all ignored me. At lunch, in the middle of the cafeteria one of my friends slapped my lunch tray down and started laughing.

It was like a scene out of a movie. I basically sprinted to the parking lot and just sat in my car. That's when I heard a tap on my window. Eric was leaning on my car. He gestured for me to roll down my window.

"I saw your friends ditch you," he said.

"Whatever," I snapped. Before I could protest he got in my car.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Drive to the Handi Mart," he said.

"What?" I asked.

"Just drive," He said without explanation.

I didn't really care at that point. I put the car into gear and we drove. When we got to the Handi Mart, he started shoving things in his pockets, like candy bars and a can of soda. I started to panic.

"What are you doing?" I asked, my heart racing.

"Haven't you ever shoplifted before?" He chuckled

I hadn't.

"Just grab something Rebecca, it's so easy. It's not grand larceny or anything," he said with an amused expression.

"No," I said firmly.

Eric was just so convincing. It was like I just didn't want to disappoint him. I grabbed a box of hair dye quickly and shoved it in my purse. After that I dropped

him off at home, which was a very run down apartment building on the other side of town.

Eric and I only got closer from there. We started dating pretty quickly. I found myself doing things I had never done before, I started drinking and he and I shoplifted pretty often. We even threw rocks through the school windows one night. I started dressing differently and acting differently. My mom almost didn't seem to notice. I actually cared about Eric. And it really seemed like he was the only one who cared about me. One day Eric didn't show up for school. I called him and called him but he didn't pick up. About a week later. My teacher took me out into the hall.

"I'm so sorry" she started "Rebecca, Eric was found dead in his apartment today. He overdosed on something."

I felt frozen. I couldn't believe it. I walked right out of the school and the teacher didn't stop me. He couldn't be gone, it didn't make sense. I got into my car and drove straight to his apartment building. There were cops everywhere.

"Miss you can't be over here," one of them said.

"What happened?" I mumbled

"Miss you need to get out of here!" A cop yelled.

All the sudden I just felt a massive wave of anger wash over me. I struggled away from the cop, grabbed a rock from the ground and threw it at a cop car window, shattering it.

I was arrested for damaging government property and assaulting a police officer. I was sentenced to 20 sessions of mandated therapy. It was weird, I felt sort of lost without Eric; I had never really had any *real* friends. I almost didn't care what happened to me.

"Thank you for sharing, Rebecca," my therapist leaned over her coffee table and shook my hand.

"I look forward to our next session," she smiled warmly and escorted me out of the building.



You never think twice about someone's fear until it kills them. No matter how many times you defend yourself, no one takes you seriously. Everyone tried to remind you how stupid it was, how "being afraid of something you need every day is ridiculous". It wasn't so ridiculous after I was driven off that bridge, was it?

I'm not quite sure when the fear started, but I remember being so afraid to even go in the shallow end of my underground pool when I was 7 years old.

"Come on Noah, it's just a pool. You can't possibly be scared of the water, could you?" my older sister, Brooke teased. I threw her a bitter look, "What if I drown? I'm not going in." Brooke breaks out into laughter. My mother's voice, hardly hiding her snickers, tells her to leave me alone. They always thought my reactions were amusing, yet when I look at my reflection in the ripples of water, all I can imagine is getting stuck. Getting pulled underneath as your lungs fill from the struggle of your panicky breaths. I shook away the thought before running inside.

Several years later, after being the only one not participating in the school's pool party kickoff, I was recommended to start meeting with my therapist, Julie. Julie helped me learn a deeper understanding of my fear. I didn't have a fear of water, but yet a fear of drowning. A fear of sinking so far into gaping bodies of water that I am unable to escape. I learned this is called aquaphobia. After that session, I wanted to educate the people in my life, but when I shared my knowledge, all they did was laugh. "Noah's making up stuff again", "You can't actually be serious?", "Someone pour a glass of water on him, it'll be funny". I made a mental note to never share with them ever again.

As I pull out of the driveway, I make sure I have my license with me. This car will not be taken away from me; I've only had it since my 18th birthday last week. I roll down

the window to let the brief wind in. I'm on my way to Julie's office. Ever since that day when I was 13, I've made sure to have weekly appointments with her. Julie talks me through how to handle myself when I feel scared or afraid. She doesn't only help me work through my aquaphobia, but also my feelings and how to control them. I connect my phone and turn on some music. I find that listening to music is one of the methods that allows me to relax when I'm dealing with any sort of anxiety. I am currently starting to worry about crossing the one-way bridge in order to reach the office. Even now, after all these years, every time I pass over it, my heart rate increases.

I drive through the intersection just before the bridge and see an accident in the distance. It has got to be miserable to be those people. I turn my eyes back to the road as a semi truck merges in front of me. I sigh as I approach the beginning of the bridge. I quickly glance over to the waves beneath me as a shiver runs down my spine. Deep breaths, that's what Julie taught you. I keep a steady speed, making sure I continue with a small distance between me and the semi. Why must this bridge be so nerve-wracking?

A notification goes off on my phone. I try to grab it out of my jeans pocket to check if it is important. I've been patiently waiting for an email from my professor about the terms for my next semester classes. I finally get my phone free from my pocket and scan the screen. I see that it's not significant and put my phone back in my pocket. When I turn back to face the road the semi comes to a halting stop. I press down on the horn as I try to slam on my brakes. I steer to hopefully avoid any major damage. I realized too late that I forgot it was a one-way bridge. My front bumper pushes through the gate as my tires roll off the edge. My stomach sinks as seconds turn into minutes. I

look out my windshield to see that I am heading head first into the river. My eyes widen, but I can't yell. My body stays in shock as the fast current approaches. I can only manage to breathe in deeply and close my eyes as I wait to reach the waves. The impact of hitting the water makes me plunge forward and takes away what might've been my last breath. Water instantly starts flooding into my car. How stupid I was to roll down the window. I open my eyes and try to roll my window up. The pressure is too much and shatters the glass. I push against the current to attempt to get the car door open. It's getting harder to breathe as I unbuckle my seatbelt in order to push with my legs. I'm not strong enough. I kick off the seat to try and push my body through the broken window. My right foot gets stuck on the steering wheel, pulling me back inside the car. I struggle to get my foot free as the difficulty of holding my little breath increases. I'm unsuccessful once again to release my foot with so much force of the water around me. I close my eyes and yell. Water rushes its way into my lungs as I feel weaker and weaker. My vision begins to blur as I inhale the salty river. Everything goes black as I forget what it was like to have air in my lungs. I think of how afraid I've been of this type of death. I wasn't crazy, I wasn't delusional, I was right. *Told you so.*

## The Clown of Dream Walker Circus

Abby Zaharia  
Grade 9  
Sahali Secondary

The interrogation room was silent, frigid despite the sun beaming just outside the building. I entered and sat down, pulling out a file and flipping through it despite knowing its contents by heart. The man across from me didn't speak, but the drumming of his fingers against the cold metal table gave away his anxiety.

*Tap tap tap tap tap, tap tap tap tap.*

I glanced up at him through my sunglasses, eyeing how his hair hung in limp curls over his eyes, disguising the haunted look masked behind a composed expression.

"Mr. Whaler," He looked up. "Do you know why you're here?"

He stared at me for a moment. Opened his mouth, closed it, and then opened it again.

"Detective, did you ever go to the circus as a child?" He replied.

I frowned. "Mr. Whaler, I do not like to repeat myself. Do you know why-"

"Yes, yes." He interrupted, waving a hand idly in my direction. "I am here because you think I killed my daughter. My sweet Eliza..." He trailed off, and I could now see something besides the mask he kept over his eyes. Fear. Grief. Rage.

I hurry on, not liking the look on his face. "I would just like to hear the events of that night from your perspective. If you feel up to telling me of course."

"I was getting to that before you interrupted me." He said. He looked disgruntled now and a bit annoyed. I didn't respond, simply leaning back against my chair and gesturing for him to continue.

Mr. Whaler began to talk.

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Did you ever go to the circus as a child, Detective? You don't exactly strike me as the type, but perhaps you were. My Eliza had always wanted to go to one. To see the clowns and acrobats, taste sugary candy on her tongue and breathe in the sharp scent of dust that clouds the air from hundreds of stampeding feet. She wanted to be a magician, you see.

I was walking down to the corner store when I saw the poster hanging from a lamppost. I stopped and stared at it. The poster read, "Come, One and All To the Dream Walker Circus! One Night and One Night Only! Entry Free For All."

At the time, I didn't think it odd for there to be no price; I just ran home, the corner store forgotten. Eliza was ecstatic, I tell you. She bounced up and down, calling, "When? When? Can we go? Please, Dad?"

"Of course!" I said, "It's only here for tonight. We can eat dinner, then head on down." I had ordered a pizza as I was too excited to cook. Finally, my baby would finally experience her dream, the thing she had been talking about for years.

The next few hours passed slowly, but finally, we made it to the lot that hosted the circus. Making our way into the mass of tents and people, I held Eliza's hand. She

looked around with stars in her eyes, a caramel apple clutched in the hand that wasn't holding mine.

Our small town never had events like this, and soon I had found myself just as in awe as my daughter was, ready for an evening of fun.

That all ended when we met the clown.

He was tall and pale. Covered in puffy garments of spots and ruffles. His makeup gave him the look of a friendly clown, but his lips were curved into a sinister smile, points reaching too high up his cheeks to be normal. And his eyes... covered with white contacts that made them look sightless, yet they seemed to brighten with an emotion I couldn't place as he spotted my daughter and I.

Eliza pulled me over to him, asking eagerly for a balloon dog. He complied, still looking at her that way, like a flower he wanted to pick. He caught me staring and grinned.

His teeth were covered in red. I rushed my daughter away before he finished her dog.

That was not the last time I saw him that night. When we got home, Eliza was practically dead on her feet and went to bed. I waited a bit, washing the dishes from dinner. Then, I looked up and saw him behind me in the window's reflection. He held up a balloon dog, that horrid smile still stretched on his face, and I heard his voice whisper in my ear.

"I never gave your girl her puppy."

I froze, spinning around, but nobody was there.

The final time I saw him was the worst. I was in bed. He was standing beside me, leaning over my face. I woke up to his bloody smile hanging above my eyes, yet I didn't react. Perhaps I thought it was a dream of sorts.

He stood up straight and pulled that dog out of his pocket, holding it out to me. I still didn't move. After a few moments, his grin finally dropped, and he looked sad. Terribly sad. But not for himself, for me.

He pulled out a needle and stabbed the balloon. A loud pop burst in my ears, and I heard a crack, like when you crack your knuckles, but louder, from the other room. Eliza's room. I didn't react, just layed back down.

The clown mimed a tear running down his face, and then he was gone.

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Mr. Whaler's voice trailed off.

"And then?" I prompted.

"She was dead...", He murmured, a tear slipping down his face. "I went to wake her up the next morning, and she was lying there, all- all broken!" He was crying now, gasping for breath. "Please! You have to believe me! I- I would never..."

I sat in silence for a moment. Then stood up. Only as I exited the room did I let my hands begin to shake.

Mr. Whaler's sobs followed me home.

*Emerald Adjei, Grade 11, St. Ann's Academy*

*Her Sweet Sun*

Through her thin window, the sun supplies light.

A radiant beam falls onto her eyes.

“Ah, a new morning,” she peacefully sighs.

A rest in the sun feels faultlessly right.

Her mind pleads, “Sleep in.” She offers no fight.

She must soon get up, but in bed, she lies.

She loves the sun and the cat on her thighs.

‘Till noon, she’ll stay as the sun swells in height.

She has no worries—wait. “My alarm clock!”

It lays it to waste, her tentative plan.

She deflates, limbs limp, her mind’s hope undone.

The sun seems to dim, then, sensing her shock.

Face pressed in pillow, she mumbles, “Oh, man.”

Oh, Sun. Oh, sweet Sun—my clock, you’re no fun.



*Emerald Adjei, Grade 11, St. Ann's Academy*

*Death by Snow*

'Round winter time, plants are watered with dread.

As green turns to white, they turn a blind eye.

They wait for It, anxious, tucked up in bed.

As green turns to white, they pray not to die.

They are confined. Unlike geese, they can't fly.

They watch clouds roll in—the temperature drop.

If they were human, they'd utter a cry.

If they were rabbits, away they would hop.

Their life would be nice in a florist shop.

There they'd be cared for, even put on show!

But life there's not long; the business may stop.

No. Life is best when Snow chooses to go.

So, the plants persevere—so cold and frail.

Spring follows next, and o'er death, plants prevail!

## THE SILENT SPARROWS

The foreboding feeling of melancholy felt like a dark raven perched on Faye Lark's shoulders. Its weight grows heavier with every aching step, compressing her soul into its grim darkness; feeding off of her pain, anguish, and confusion. Feeling the presence of the stranger, Faye stumbled, moving faster than before through the oppressing alleyways only lit by the faint light of the moon. Faye's thoughts thrashed angrily in her peripheral, begging to escape her skull. The world had turned into a kaleidoscope, making it hard to stay focused on the task at hand. The very important task Faye wasn't supposed to forget, the task she had spent her life training and preparing for. But now she couldn't remember, for the life of her. *She couldn't remember.* Faye felt the eyes of the stranger piercing through her, looking within her for what he most craved. For the first time, Faye didn't know what to do.

She held her bloodied hands to her temples, trying to stop the spinning, desperately trying to think through the haze that cloaked her common sense. Faye's mouth was dry and the metallic taste of blood was on her lips. On the filthy ground near her feet, she noticed a canteen. Not caring if it was water or poison, not even wondering where it came from, she tipped it over her expectant tongue. A single drop of foul liquid inched out of the canteen and dripped onto her tongue. Faye gagged and threw the canteen against the wall in disgust. It bounced off with a weirdly satisfying *clang*.

She heard him laugh, cruel and gravely at her stupidity. Her body convulsed at the sudden wave of nausea and she doubled over, hands and knees on the cold concrete, dryly retching up the pitiful contents of her stomach. After what felt like an eternity of retching, the exhaustion hit, making her brain go fuzzy.

Faye shuffled to the wall nearest the dumpster bins and collapsed against the hard brick, a little painfully. A sudden searing pain shot through Faye's abdomen and she drunkenly unzipped her jacket and peeled her shirt back from her stomach to see a deep gash. It was as wide as her open palm with gnarled crevasses, caked with dry blood, pus, and God knows what else. She could hear his amused laughter echo off the walls, the sound was an extreme contrast to how Faye was feeling inside.

"That's going to leave a wicked scar," Faye mumbled with a wince and sadistic grin plastered on her face. She ripped off a piece of her cargo pants, which were already pretty torn and roughly made a tourniquet with the scrap, to hopefully slow the bleeding. Faye searched through her messed up brain to think of somewhere to go, if she could remember such places. Then, she remembered her CommCaster. Faye shuffled around in the pockets of her tattered black cargo pants, praying to whoever was listening that he hadn't taken it.

"Hah! Didn't think to take this, eh?" she jeered, brandishing her CommCaster above her head. Like many others owned by The Silent Sparrows, Faye's CommCaster was a crystal-shaped device of instant transportation and communication. It was the calming colour of the sky during the afternoon, with silver detailing. It was as light as a coin, and at the very centre of it sat the symbol of a dainty bejewelled sparrow. Slowly, without further injuring herself, Faye straightened up against the wall and pressed the CommCaster against her dry lips.

"Agent Faye reporting and requesting access to landing port. Over," she said in a forced staccato tone, trying not to sound like she was in pain, in which she very much was.

"Faye?" answered a staticky voice. "I mean...Agent Faye Lark? Is that you?"

“Yes, who else would it be?” Faye said, recognizing now who had answered the transmission.

“Oh, Faye. We thought you were dead! We searched everywhere for you!”

“Well, if you don’t let me dock I’m gonna be dead real soon, Celeste,” she continued forcefully, knowing very well that he was right beside her, his shadow looming over her, his cold breath on her neck making her hair rise.

“I’m on it, preparing for transport. Over,” Celeste said hastily, knowing very well that whenever Faye spoke with that tone, she was not messing around. As fast as a kingfisher dives, Faye slowly felt the particles and atoms in her body separate.

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Faye woke up to the sound of someone setting down a tray on a table beside her. She opened her tired eyes but the brightness of the room temporarily blinded her. Her eyes slowly adjusted to take in her surroundings. She was in a bed, lying in the Headquarters’ hospital wing. A tray was set on the bedside table with some food and water.

“Good morning, sunshine,” sung Celeste Budgerigar as she sat down at Faye’s bedside. “You sure have had a rough past couple of weeks, eh? Thank goodness you’re okay. Man, did you give us a fright.” Celeste chuckled to herself.

“When did I get in bed? The last thing I remember was preparing to dock and he was trying to...” Faye said hoarsely, trying to recount the events of the last time she was conscious.

“The guards found you passed out cold when you docked, you have been unconscious for 2 days,” Celeste said matter-of-factly.

Faye looked down at her stomach to see a large rectangular bandage. Obviously the handy work of Mrs. Finch, the henurse of the Headquarters of The Silent Sparrows.

“You got banged up pretty bad, Faye, you were bleeding like a stuck pig. You were hallucinating...” Celeste said, seeing where Faye's eyes had drifted. “What did he do to you, you know, before you ended up in that alley?”

“I don't know,” Faye uttered, and that was what scared her the most.

She didn't know.

Jayme Konrad  
Grade 9  
Westsyde Secondary School

Never ending cycle

She's always felt something  
Even when he hadn't  
When he grazed her arm  
With his she was brought back to reality

She noticed the smallest details  
When he would chew his nails  
How shaky his legs got when he was anxious

He drew things out of her no one else did  
With small jokes  
She let herself go completely  
He made her feel things like never before

The way her stomach turned  
Or the way she wept  
Differently than before  
He's the only one who she's ever wanted to belong to  
Yet she grew weary

Because he began to distance  
He never expressed himself to her  
Nor showed her how he felt

There's so much to him  
So much no one but her sees  
But what if it's a picture she painted herself?  
She'll never know  
And he'll never tell  
The never ending cycle of the unknown.

Jayme Konrad  
Grade 9  
Westsyde Secondary School

Gone

She was there Christmas  
She was there Easter  
She was there on my birthday

How was she gone in the blink of an eye?  
Leaving me to grow alone  
What was she thinking?

I saw her just that week  
I ran from her  
I didn't even look back

All I can do is grieve  
Mourn  
Scream  
So many blanks that can't be filled in

Why is mine gone?  
She was mine  
My mom was my mom  
And she's gone

*Abby S. Faith Friesen*  
Grade 9  
Kamloops Christian School

## A Home Should Be

Memories wander through the halls,

Love is plastered to the walls

In the family room I see,

A loved one smiling back at me

Even during a horrible day,

I know that I am here to stay

Therefore a home should always be,

A place where my family's there for me

A home is not something you can only see

But make it whatever you want it to be

It's somewhere your whole family can fit

Nothing on earth can make it split

It's not just a roof that goes over your head,

But it is the safety of a nice warm bed

A home is not something somebody can take,

Rather a safe place a family will make



*Abby S. Faith Friesen*  
Grade 9  
Kamloops Christian School

## Spring

Enjoy the nice warm days you've got  
Spring memories made in days so hot  
The crows may laugh from up above  
But a sweet whistling song is the one I love

If the rain will ever let go  
To let delicate flowers sprout and grow  
A warm spring day will come around  
And the snow no more will keep the ground

Leaves are growing back on trees  
Pollen in the air makes you sneeze  
Rosebuds hopefully start to sprout  
The wind lady seems to dance about

The lovely warmth melts the snow  
The birds in the trees start to crow  
The gentle breeze carries their song  
The rain never lasting much too long

Flowers of velvet wave to those  
Who love the sweet smell of a precious rose  
Therefore Spring will always be  
A season very dear to me

*Abby S. Faith Friesen*  
Grade 9  
Kamloops Christian School

## Who Is The Wind?

Can you hear her striding around?  
See her skirt sweeping leaves off of the ground?  
Her whistling song is a lullaby  
And in a storm you can hear her cry

You cannot see her, but you know she's there  
She lifts birds up with lots of care  
She never leaves a footprint trail  
But the breeze right there is her dress' tail

Never walks, she'd rather glide  
The grass moves with her every stride  
She likes to make tree branches sway  
But the meadow's where you'll see her play

She sets your kites and sails gliding  
She's ready when your ship needs guiding  
She makes the flowers bow and bend  
The wind lady is a lovely friend

*Abby S. Faith Friesen*  
Grade 9  
Kamloops Christian School

## Things I Love

From the depths of the oceans and above  
Are multiple things I dearly love  
From nature's beauty to clear blue skies  
From laughing loved ones to Grandma's pies

The friends that are so close to me,  
Are the friends that I really love to see  
I love those that'll always care,  
The ones I know will always be there

Counting stars when night falls  
Watching the clouds when the rooster calls  
Climbing somewhere way up high  
Fancy walking along the sky

I love to run around and play  
On a beautiful warm and sunny day  
Wonderful sounds like a bird's soft call  
No doubt about it, I love them all

A storm was coming, you could feel it in the air. There was a buzz of activity as Emberlynn's family frantically secured their house. In Norway, the storms were few but ferocious. She had lived there for as long as she could remember in a little house by the ocean, with her giant family. Her father hunted the polar bears as they traversed the ocean ice. Emberlynn wasn't nearly old enough to hunt, nor would her father let her. Still, she was happy to help in any way she could. Emberlynn had the ice-blue eyes of her father and blond curls and freckles from her mother. She spent most of her time helping cut up the seal meat her father and uncles had caught then setting it up to dry. Sometimes her father would catch a polar bear, and she would hang the pelt to dry before her mother and her aunts wrapped it up to make a taxidermy. People paid well for taxidermies, it was her family's only source of income. At the moment, Emberlynn was quite flustered. She ran over to her Oma, who was in her rocking chair. "Smells like trouble." Oma kept muttering.

"What can I help with?" she asked, but Oma barely spared her a glance. A hand grabbed her arm, and she turned to see her mother standing in front of her.

"Navy left Wooly in the fishing hut again. Can you go get it and any fish we caught?" Her little sister, Navy, had a stuffed wooly mammoth that she cherished. It was the same thing every time; Wooly would get lost and Navy would wail at the top of her lungs until he was found and returned to her. Emberlynn followed the wails to Navy, who was huddled under a table.

"We are going to get Wooly." Emberlynn whispered to Navy. Emberlynn took her into the room where they stored their clothes and guns. It was sealed off from the rest of

the house because when you open the door, the cold wind rushes in. Emberlynn bundled herself and Navy up. She grabbed the shotgun from the rack, which was required to leave the house. A precaution, in case you encountered any animals. Emberlynn's father had a scar down his back from a nasty encounter with a polar bear. Emberlynn pulled her sister close and opened the door.

She was knocked back by the force of the wind. Snow poured into the room, and when Emberlynn looked outside, all she could see was white. Emberlynn pushed them through the doorway and slammed the door behind them. She trudged through the deep snow, picking her sister up to avoid losing her. The wind was getting worse so they needed to be fast. Once inside the hut, she grabbed the basket of fish. Navy ripped herself out of Emberlynn's arms and ran to the corner of the hut. She raised a triumphant hand, with Wooly clutched in her tiny fist.

The fabric of the hut behind her started to move unnaturally. Emberlynn's eyes widened and panic shot through her as the shape of two, giant paws pushed into the canvas.

"Navy!" She screamed. Navy looked up at the two giant paw prints, frozen. Claws had now impaled the screen, ripping a giant hole in the canvas. Emberlynn could see big, black eyes surrounded by white fur staring back at her. She ran toward Navy, picking her up and throwing her backward as the canvas fell away. She was standing face to face with a ten-foot-tall polar bear. She took a step back, but then she remembered her gun. She whipped it out, pointing it right in between the bear's eyes.

The polar bear roared, and that's when Emberlynn noticed how skinny this bear truly was. With global warming, it must be hard to find food. Emberlynn felt ashamed of the pang of sympathy she felt in her stomach. Emberlynn couldn't shoot this bear. It just wanted food, and she had gotten in the way.

BANG! The gun went off. Emberlynn looked down at the hole she shot in the ice. The bear reared back before it turned and ran. The gunshot had spooked it. Wasting no time, she grabbed her sister and the fish. She decided to leave half the fish for the bear if it returned. Her father would be ashamed of her for failing to do the very job her family had done for decades. As Emberlynn returned to the house, she realized she didn't regret it. That bear didn't need to die for their safety.

Emberlynn yanked open the front door and locked it behind her. She put the fish down in the corner and pulled the winter clothing off of Navy and herself. She slung the gun back up, replacing the bullet she had shot. She didn't feel truly at ease until she was surrounded by her family once again.

"We heard a gunshot!" Emberlynn's mother exclaimed. She was already fussing over Navy, who was clutching Wooly. Tears had frozen on her cheeks. Emberlynn told them the truth or at least part of it. They didn't need to know she spared the bear, rather that she missed her shot. She felt guilty that she had lied, but couldn't bring herself to tell the truth. Emberlynn waited until her family dispersed before walking back over to Oma. She had stopped muttering to herself. They sat in silence for a while, before Oma finally spoke.

“You made the right choice, Kjæreste.” That meant “sweetheart” in Norwegian. How had her Oma figured out what she had done? Emberlynn saw movement in the window, and there was a polar bear. She was sure it was the same one, and she was staring at her with big, brown eyes. Beside her, there was a cub. The polar bear must be a mother. They were both eating the fish she had left them. Emberlynn smiled and closed the blinds, saying farewell.

Brooke Warner  
Grade 9  
Sahali Secondary School  
City of Azx

It was a cold and rainy evening. Our small boat was hitting waves and rocking like a swing. Everyone around me was in a state of pure panic. It was worrying, seeing my normally calm crew so frazzled. I got off of the hammock I had been laying on to investigate when a foreign object struck me in the back of the head, like a speed boat. Then, everything went dark. I woke up to light shining right in my eyes. I was laying on a rather comfortable surface. I looked around to see that I was in a lab of some kind. What was going on here? The comfortable surface I am on looks to be a cot. On the nearest counter, there were several different vials filled with strange-looking substances ranging in colour, opacity, and amounts. I slowly swung my legs over the side attempting to stand up. My balance was off but I was able to stand relatively well. I took a few wobbly steps before locating the door on the opposite wall, which seemed to be the only exit from this room. I decided that in this unknown environment, escaping was my best option.

I used the walls and countertops as support, making my way slowly to the doorway. Once I made it there I opened the door and ran as fast as I could. Which wasn't, for the record, all that fast. I saw a bright light emitting from the end of the hallway, not even twenty feet away from me. With a few missteps and almost falls I finally made it through the door. I was met with fresh air and the wonderful outside world. As I looked around it was so green and luscious. I looked around, and I saw advanced buildings, trains, and so many things that I hadn't ever seen. This city seems to be very technologically advanced..

The building I had come from seemed to be secluded from the rest of the city. I took a few steps onto the path leading toward a tunnel that led toward the city. I emerged from the tunnel tube and met busy streets of people. There were shops,



Brooke Warner  
Grade 9  
Sahali Secondary School  
City of Azx

stands, and even a handful of vehicles parked along the sides of the paths. A person in a guard uniform approached me. "Hello Miss, please follow me." He said. He had long dark brown hair and a scar running from his forehead to his lip. He guided me through the streets, towards a large skyscraper-looking building. I figured no harm would be done following him.

Within a matter of about twenty minutes, we arrived at the front of the building. As I looked up I saw big lettering on the front of it. It was quite odd though. It looked like random gibberish to me. It said "Azx-ukla", whatever that means. We soon entered the large building. The man started directing me toward a structure shaped like a raindrop with a flat bottom.

The doors to it opened and I took a cautious step in. I had a bad feeling about this machine. The guard pushed a button with the letters QK on it and the door slowly closed. In mere seconds, the machine went whipping up with immense speed before opening again. "We are here," The guard said. "That death trap gave me a heart attack, I'm going to need a second," I told him, taking a second to breathe before stepping into the room. It had a row of glass windows on one side and large metallic gold doors on the other. As I started wandering walking towards the glass, I was quickly redirected to in front of the enormous doors. The guard pressed the big red button which opened the doors automatically. Inside the doors looked to be a very fancy meeting room. As I made my way in I took my new surroundings in. There were chairs in a circle, if you could call them chairs. They looked more like thrones.. All look to be varied in shape and colour, with the largest one up on a raised platform right at the head of it all. My best guess was that this was a sort of futuristic throne room.

Brooke Warner  
Grade 9  
Sahali Secondary School  
City of Azx

I must have stopped or was walking too slow because the guard gave me a slight nudge, pushing me ahead. Before long I was in front of the head chair which held an older lady upon it. I hadn't seen her a moment before. After a moment of both of us staring at each other, she finally spoke. "You must leave, your people have sent boats to find you."

"But, I just got here," I complained. I would like to explore the city more.,

"Don't worry child, one day you will see us all again. Now go before they find this place." The lady said. I couldn't argue. I nodded before turning and following the guard. Once we were off the elevator, he started to run. There was no time to lose and I took off after him. I did track and field as a kid so it wasn't difficult. Before long we made it to a dock where a speed boat was parked. We jumped in and he started the engine. We were off.

Within no time we were at a clear barrier. It must conceal the city from the outside world. I turned to the guard who was with me for most of this endeavour. I almost felt sad to see him go, even though he barely spoke.

"Goodbye, I hope to see you again someday." He simply nodded his head. I stood up and dove into the water, swimming through the barrier and into the open ocean. Before long a rescue boat came and I climbed into it via a ladder. As I stood on the rescue boat, I planned to keep my promise and make sure no one else ever found this place again.

**Clara Chapman**

Grade 9

Kamloops School of the Arts

Bravery

## **BRAVERY**

Bravery is something that doesn't necessarily come naturally. Doing the right thing in the face of danger can be difficult, as it can often defy our instinct to take flight in the face of adversity.

Every day I wonder how brave I would be if I faced the same daily situations many people face. Would I be brave enough to help those in need if it meant risking my own safety? Sitting at my desk writing, I feel torn. I watch the news and see rescuers pulling injured women, men and children out of the rubble in Turkey. In Ukraine, men and women who never intended to be soldiers fight for their country, holding up a strong resistance against the Russian aggressors, but longing for their families and peace. Girls and women in Afghanistan fight for the right to education and freedom, something I take for granted. I have the luxury of not facing every day with the worry of being shot or having a chunk of rubble fall on me. How brave would I be given their circumstances?

My great-grandpa fought for all of World War II. For him, fighting wasn't a matter of choice. He understood that choosing to be brave against the onslaught of German troops was necessary to ensure the freedom of millions worldwide. In reality, the

**Clara Chapman**

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Bravery

soldiers he battled were in the same boat as him; they all felt they had no choice.

Bravery wasn't just an option for these mere mortals; they had to fight or die.

Yet here we are, nearly eighty years after the final weapons of World War II were laid down, and we still live in a world divided by social status, ethnicity, and wars as vast as our oceans. Governments and those in power continue their tyranny and commit atrocities against the people they control.

I see the hopelessness in the eyes of young girls who long to be at a desk in a classroom but stand instead behind the shroud of a veil. Hiding their faces, repeating vows instead of Shakespeare, these girls my age and younger wish for what I consider my basic human rights! Sometimes I feel guilty about having the privilege of education while others die for that right. It makes me realize I should never take my education for granted.

I don't face these same adversities and I live a comfortable lifestyle; how can I be brave and support those who are oceans away? Lately, I have begun to understand that I must find my voice. Sometimes I don't feel brave; my struggles with anxiety cause words to become muddled on my tongue. Still, I feel an overwhelming urge to write and share my words. I will be brave.

**Clara Chapman**

Grade 9

Kamloops School of the Arts

Bravery

I have often questioned how my writings will be helpful or useful, but if they offer even the slightest comfort, the tiniest glimmer of hope and support, they will have served a purpose. My words will be read and spoken aloud to support those silenced. When single voices band together, they can create a tsunami strong enough to deaden the thunder of bombs. If my words can be joined with others in a chorus of hope, they will have served a purpose and hopefully offer strength to those unable to speak on their own behalves. Our chorus will create an impenetrable force of courage and bravery.

I won't stop until my pen becomes too heavy to hold and my hand cramps from the sheer magnitude of my written words. I will be brave.

My words are my weapon. I will stand with those near and far and join my voice in the crusade for freedom of choice for all. My great-grandpa was brave and honourable, and I will make him proud by continuing the battle for equality. I am a Foucault, and like my great-grandpa, I will be brave.

Hopefully, I will never have to fight in a war, and I won't ever be close enough to hear the gun's crack or smell the pungent odour of gunpowder and death. But my words are my weapon and the most powerful I possess. If I can find the words that help even one

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Grade 9

Kamloops School of the Arts

Bravery

person, I can look back at my life when I am old and feel I have succeeded. I will have been brave.

Gabriel Jennings

Grade 9

St. Ann's Academy

Scars

### Scars

How would I know if they really were there?

Did I hope they would not forget?

Face to face with that bleak lifeless stare...

With what I know now, I cannot regret.

I recall the times we had together.

The autumn breeze, that cold hint of snow.

Filled now with a deep bitterness, I burn that letter.

Those childish games I must outgrow.

I edge forward and do not look back.

That second thought must fade away.

That stinging pain of a distant memory track

If a person is dead, does the memory decay?

O so mortal that numbing feeling...

You fool, your actions were so revealing.

Gabriel Jennings

Grade 9

St. Ann's Academy

Nightfall

### **Nightfall**

Feelings subdued, now morphing into pain.

In this chaos I am so confused...

Was there shade cast onto my brain?

The fog settles in, but I still feel used.

In the end, was it really relevant?

This world, full of irrelevance, after all...

Darkness takes the day, strange but elegant,

But, will I lose my mind again, at nightfall?

A brilliant star concealed again by smog.

In the cold twilight, I long for the sun.

Things start to shift, digital to analog.

Is that truly the shadow of someone?

When night falls and takes away the light...

Will I be cast astray, bereft of my sight.



Willow Hart

Grade 9

Brocklehurst Middle School

Falling Into Love With Yourself

### **Falling Into Love With Yourself**

I hope there are days where you catch yourself falling in love with being alive all over again,

Even just for a moment.

I hope you pause and feel the warmth illuminate your heart

Like sunshine's golden touch when the feeling has become foreign to your body.

I'd love to watch from a distance as you fall in love with the way sunset colors

Look like ribbons made of silk caress your body

And take your breath away.

I hope you have moments of relief when your heart feels safe even in the direst of situations.

I want you to embrace the imperfections that God gave us.

I know it's difficult for someone so quintessential to accept

That our own faults are what makes us worth being here.

I hope you continue to sing to the moon when your at your lowest points,

Even when no one hears.

I want you to let the moonlight's pool govern your skin

Letting in every surface feeling until you're fully submerged.

Your resilience is something so powerful

Willow Hart

Grade 9

Brocklehurst Middle School

Falling Into Love With Yourself

And I hope you realize that.

I hope you fall in love with everything I see in you.

Now there's only so much I can do.

But I'd never stop trying to show you everything you're worth.

I know,

Things like this take time.

But how easy was it to find yourself falling in love with the idea of being happy?

Of feeling okay?

You deserve that and so much more.

I hope one day you fall in love with everything wonderful,

About being here,

About you,

About all of it.

You are worth every sunshine kiss and every moonlit confession.

I'll be here, watching you fall in and out of love.

And I promise I'll stay to see you fall in love with yourself

And with being alive.

Because the truth is,

Willow Hart

Grade 9

Brocklehurst Middle School

Falling Into Love With Yourself

I could fall in love with you,

Over and over again.

Willow Hart  
Grade 9  
Brocklehurst Middle School  
The Seasonal Questionnaire

### **The Seasonal Questionnaire**

I never considered the answer to, "What's your favorite season?" A serious question.

Because I would say whatever came to mind,

No hesitation.

I didn't have a favorite because nothing particularly represented me.

Summer gave me the longest break, so I would use it as an answer.

Just scribbling it down so I could move on; I was always in a hurry.

But my mental health slows my world down

And all my mind does now is think.

But I finally have an answer.

Even though, like me, it may be the weakest link.

The winter cold that lingers like frost on the window panes.

The light leaves the day early,

The birds no longer chirp,

And the darkness fills not only the sky but my mind.

Spring is the season I was born in,

But I don't really enjoy my birthday anymore

Because all I really do now is wake up and mourn.

Willow Hart  
Grade 9  
Brocklehurst Middle School  
The Seasonal Questionnaire

For yet I am another year farther away from the girl I once was,  
Care free and hopeful.

The season that is supposed to be full of life but  
Unfortunately I feel that I am Ichor,  
Killing everything I touch.

Now summer represents months full of endless chatter in my brain I can't shut off,  
It's longing for the Canadian teenage dream  
That I know will never come true for me.  
So I'd scroll through social media almost believing their perfect lives.

Fall is the last option and the obvious answer to this question that wasn't so serious  
Yet somehow it has become so.

Fall isn't warmth, rebirth, or a wonderland full of snow.  
It is death and beauty.

Words that should be a paradox but truly can't be for death isn't inherently ugly,  
And life isn't inherently beautiful.

Fall shows us how beautiful it can be to let the dead go,  
For I imagine the leaves as parts of me I may or may not see again next year,  
An important truth to accept so I may grow.

Willow Hart

Grade 9

Brocklehurst Middle School

The Seasonal Questionnaire

I never chose fall, it was chosen for me.

For this season full of death has never made me feel more alive.

Cold wind on my cheeks, leaves falling on me as I read a book on a bench, under a tree,

And the truth is,

I've never felt more free.

Alex shaw

Sa-hali secondary

Grade 9

## Lost stars

We all start off as shooting stars  
Wanting to find all the wonders of the world  
Later to turn into lost stars  
We all become lost stars in are lives  
Trying to figure out who we are in life  
What friends we should have  
And what person we want to be in society  
When we are lost stars  
Some people find themselves faster than others  
While others take longer or possible become hidden  
The hidden fall into a pit of despair  
They don't trust, like, love, and believe in others  
And themself  
Hidden stars need assistance in building a ladder  
A ladder of hope  
And once people find their way  
They become planets in their own  
Galaxy

Pengxu.Wang G9  
Death Stare  
South Kamloops Secondary School

Title: Death Stare

There is a story in the town that when a person is walking in a dark and silent alley, don't look back because there will be a monster staring at you. As long as you turn your head, it will bite off your limbs and swallow your body. This story is often told by adults to children so that children don't go out to play at night. This story is just a trick to scare children, as long as older children or adults don't believe this story, but they won't try.

Until there was a child, Michael, who insisted on proving that the story was not true, so he went to the alley in the story alone at night. He walked a few steps according to the method in the story and looked back to see if there were any monsters. He repeated this several times, but there was no monster around. He happily said that the story was false. He walked so many times and no monster appeared. Then he decided to go back and tell his friends, so he walked towards the town.

When he walked for a while, he found that the distance from the town to him was always the same. At first he thought it was an illusion, but gradually he was sure that he couldn't leave this alley because he returned to the place where he walked back first, and his mood went from happy to restless to scared. The sky was getting more and more drowsy, and there was no ray of light in the surroundings. Gradually, the distant town also disappeared into the night. He thought that the monster must have come, but after a long time, there was still no monster. After a long time, he gradually got tired and leaned against the wall and fell asleep.



Pengxu.Wang G9  
Death Stare  
South Kamloops Secondary School

When he opened his eyes again, he found that he was no longer in the alley, but on his own warm bed. He was very puzzled, so he got up and ran to his mother to ask how he came back yesterday, but his mother was very puzzled and said that he had been in the room all the time. Michael thought he was just having a nightmare and went to play with his friends, but after two or three days he found that they ate the same food and said the same words every time. The things he saw were the same, and the things he played with his friends were the same, so he felt something was wrong. Until one day he plucked up the courage to go to the alley again at night, trying to find a way to change, but this time it was different. When he turned around, he saw the monster. The monster was completely hidden in the dark, only two eyes and a gaping mouth glowing white. He stared straight at the little boy in front of him. Before Michael could react, he was swallowed by monsters. Not long after, a man who had been missing for more than 100 years appeared in the alley. His appearance and clothes were exactly the same as those of 100 years ago. The boy Michael had since disappeared.

Later, the man who came back told the town about the fact that there was a monster in the alley. Hearing this news, everyone in the town panicked. Afterwards, they made a rule that no one was allowed to walk alone in the dark and silent alley at night, and the story spread became a taboo. The monster attacked people because people saw him, so people renamed this story: death stare.

Madeline Dangerfield  
Grade 9  
Brocklehurst Middle School  
Dear Mrs. Skye

*Dear Mrs. Sky*

Dear Mrs. Sky

Every time that I look at you a smile shines bright  
Not only on my face but on all those you look in the eye  
I see you in everything I do  
From walking down the sidewalk  
To meeting someone new  
You are a part of who I am shaped to be  
From the way you warm and love me  
Every time I look up to see you  
I am mesmerized by the new pattern you display  
Never quite the same as yesterday  
Some days you are dark and gray  
I just hope that tomorrow will take the pain away  
I don't take a enough time to truly tell you  
How magnificent you are in all that you do  
What would the world be without you up so high  
Dark and desolate  
Never day only night

Madeline Dangerfield  
Grade 9  
Brocklehurst Middle School  
Dear Mrs. Skye

No rain, but still pain

Joy would cease to exist for a while

I would lose my smile

The thought is absolutely vile

If you were to leave I would fear to move on

Always thinking about the way that you shone

But you're here right now

The sun rays have not gone out

So I'll be thankful for the time you're here

Because, who truly knows when you could disappear

Madeleine Dangerfield

Grade 9

Brocklehurst Middle School

Oh, Little Girl

### **Oh, Little Girl**

I miss the little girl looking out the window

Who smiled

And cheered

Every time she saw a rainbow

Watching the rain pour

Pitter patter, pitter patter

Tapping on the droplet-covered glass

Dancing in the tall grass

Life never seemed to move too fast

Looking up into the big blue sky

Watching as the clouds slowly waltz by

But soon

The world loses its colour

All we see now are storm clouds and thunder

Small things like finding a three-leaf clover

No longer bring us joy

Is it all over?

What happened to secret handshakes

Skipping stones out on the lake

Madeleine Dangerfield

Grade 9

Brocklehurst Middle School

Oh, Little Girl

Laughs that brought us tummy aches

Earthquakes and spiders used to bring us fear

But now it's letting people draw near

Getting older every year

It is so hard to stop the tears

Our mental health becomes a landslide

Causing destruction as it plummets

There is no one by your side

Only a heavy feeling in your stomach

But worst of all are the people who leave

Those you have to grieve

Or the ones who hurt you

Only to move on to someone new

It washes over me like waves

But there is no lifeboat here to save

All I'm left to do is drown

I make no sounds

My head pounds

For I am bound

Bound to this place

Where is my saving grace

Madeleine Dangerfield

Grade 9

Brocklehurst Middle School

Oh, Little Girl

They always tell you it'll get better

But it sometimes feels like I'm in a paper shredder

I wish I could write the little girl a letter

To tell her the only place they led her

Was down

They upset her then forget her

Because no one truly cares

Those bedtime stories were to help you not be scared

To show you a world where you could always be repaired

Oh, little girl, don't listen to their lies

You can look them in the eyes and say nice try

But in the end

You'll always have to say goodbye