



School District No. 73 (Kamloops / Thompson)

2017 Young Authors' Conference

Marg van Duesen Award Recipients & Honorable Mentions

ELEMENTARY WINNER - Recipient of Marg van Duesen Award

Adam Vukusic, Gr. 6 Aberdeen Elementary: "Until the Bell Rang"

Honorable Mentions

Allie Piroddi, Gr. 4 Kamloops School of the Arts: "The Magical Secret of Elvis Trolley"

Quilla Decker, Gr. 5 Lloyd George Elementary: "The Wish"

Paige Foidart, Gr. 6 A.E. Perry: "The Essence of Who We Are"

Fyfer Brookes-Gillingham, Gr. 7 Pinantan Elementary: "The Window"

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#### *SECONDARY WINNER - Recipient of Marg van Duesen Award*

*Maggie Jones, Gr. 9 South Kamloops Secondary: "Icarus" and "[remember]"*

#### *Honorable Mentions*

*Lauren Fulton, Gr. 8 South Kamloops Secondary: "Cricket"*

*Mary Pinette, Gr. 9 South Kamloops Secondary: "Aurelius"*

*Talia Wiens, Gr. 10 South Kamloops Secondary: "The Young Rebels"*

*MacKenzie Sewell, Gr. 11 South Kamloops Secondary: "Paper Things"*

*Raifta Cameron, Gr. 12 NorKam Secondary: "Memories of Man"*

*Icarus*

think of Icarus, they said,

think of the boy who dreamed too hard and flew too high, and fell.

think of Semele, they said,

think of the woman who tried to see more than she should, and trembled so hard she shattered herself once it was revealed.

think of Io, they said,

think of the girl who was punished for the attention of a god by a goddess, forced to flee in a form not her own, from a menace that should not have been hers.

think of Andromeda, they said,

think of the princess who was made to sacrifice herself for crimes not her own, for the appeasement of sacred gods whom she honored, whom she did not offend, and who was saved only by fleeting chance.

think of Helen, they said,

think of the girl dragged into a conflict taking place on foreign shores, who watched, horrified, as those she loved went to war over her, who was given as a gift to a boy foolish enough to put himself in a godly conflict.

think of Cassandra, they said,

think of the prophetess who cried to any and all of the fall of her city, who had been blessed with sight then cursed with the burden of knowing, of speaking the truth and being seen as a liar by the great god Apollo for

refusing when he gave her the gift of his lofty bed.

think of Pelops, they said,

think of the boy fed to the gods by his father,

who served as an experiment for a mortal trying to undermine the gods,

who was reincarnated, but with a now ivory shoulder,

flesh eaten by one in mourning for a missing daughter.

think, you said,

think of Icarus, that boy who dreamed too hard and flew too high, yes, but found  
glory in the moment of his fall.

when, we asked,

when do those who took that leap of faith gain the chance

to share the spotlight with those who blundered? with those who tried?

when, we asked,

when do we share the stories

of Persephone,

Persephone who tumbled - stepped - down, down into the darkness,

and found a place where the

pomegranates grow,

Persephone Praxidike,

of Daedalus,

Daedalus who made and made and made til what he had created made itself a mind,

who outsmarted Thanatos until he was ready to cross that river - gold coin as payment -  
and throng with those other shades amongst the asphodel.

of Perseus,

Perseus who fought and rescued and clawed out a happy ending for him and his,  
who looked at the sky - at the gods - and dared to rebel against any tragic  
fate they might have in store for him,

of Odysseus,

Odysseus who went away to war for ten long years and spent ten long years more  
fighting his way home, who won himself back his home and wife and son and people,  
of all those who made themselves a life to be proud of?

think, we said,

think of Icarus, that boy who dreamed and dreamed and flew, and at the moment of his  
reckoning felt that warm sun on his face, even as his  
wings were melting, who if nothing else, had found his own glory.

*[remember]*

you,

you are made of molecules,

remember that.

but your molecules are not

the way you breathe deep at night

knit your bones back inside your skin.

the way a smile stole its way across your face

the first time you saw the ocean,

saw waves crashing

remember that.

you are your molecules and more,

you are skin and blood and words and veins

you are stars and cartilage and melodies

remember that.

magic comes in many forms and

you are but one. there will always be

someone who shines brighter

but take care, little star,

not to weigh yourself too heavily in the balance,

understand that everyone was once

where you are now,

that they have had eons, ages, to reach this point,

iota by iota

remember that.

sun shines and birds sing no

matter the weather inside

there is always something,

something for someone

and one day,

there will be something,

something for you.

remember that.

## Cricket

Water bubbles below me, slapping the rocks and tickling my bare toes. The tendrils of water reach out, trying to pull me in, but they are too weak. I step forward, toes curling carefully on the slippery rock. Mama says I mustn't go near the river. "The water is cold and the current swift," she warns. "It will try and take you away from me." But I go anyway. I know the river better than she does. It teases, but I know it won't ever hurt me. We have an understanding.

I reach my foot forward, leaning to land on the dry piece in the center. Steady. I press my foot down, letting my weight fall onto the stone. Quickly, I bring my other foot to join the first. Now is the worst part, the most treacherous, but I know I can make it. I have to. I look past the long gap between the rocks to the other side. Sitting on the bank is a cat. She is wild, yet she looks at me encouragingly, coaxing me on. I smile at her, and take a deep breath. Focusing on the stone before me, I tense. Then, I leap. My legs reach out under me, yearning for the feeling of the rock beneath them. I'm flying, about to land, my toe grazes the edge... and suddenly, everything goes wrong. The earth slows its constant, dizzying spin, and I am floating, slowly tipping farther and farther back.

I realize I have made a crucial mistake. The earth speeds up again and suddenly I am wet, the shock of the cold stealing my breath. I am pulled by the water, rushing towards a rock. I slam into it chest first, my body lurching violently in reaction. Air is not reaching my lungs, and my chest feels like it's caving in. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I am swept along silently, only to run into another rock. Bang. My head. Everything is blurry now, like a window clouded by breath. My body swirling, I try to scream but the river takes it away. A sense of betrayal washes over me. The river, my friend, is taking me, just like mama said it would. It lied to me, lied when I

asked it to be my friend, lied that it would never dare hurt me. The water swirls in front of me in a mocking grimace, taunting. "Stupid girl" it sneers. "Idiot child." Its words ring in my head, and I am pulled along once again. Bang. My head again, over and over I am slammed into the shards, the world becoming more and more blurry around me.

I think of my room, my doll. I want her to be here, to offer some comfort. Will I ever see her again? And mama, will she miss me? I'm sure she will cry. She will sob and wail like she did when Poppy died. I feel guilty to cause her such pain, but the damage is done, the pain now inevitable. I know I should hope this is a dream, the cold, the weightlessness, the pain. But I know it's not. The river is too real. And the feeling of death, waiting around the next twist of the current too terrifying.

I'm starting to fade now, darkness enclosing, me each lurch against a rock bringing me back a little light only to plunge in again, deeper than before. Will death hurt? Is there anything after? I know it's very improbable, but what if? It would be lovely to see Poppy again. She did leave so soon, so suddenly. But then again, maybe I deserve to be punished. For walking on the rocks, each step an act of betrayal to my mother. For not doing my chores, and following the yellow cat who spoke instead of purred. Oh. That last rock hit hard. I have only seconds left. I push my eyes open. I see a spinning, out of focus view of the filthy water, carrying me along. Rocks rush past, too fast for me to even cringe.

Suddenly a strange sense of calm washes over me. I think I am ready now. How strange for someone as young as me to be ready so soon. I imagine my photo in the paper. I imagine I will be front page news. The death of a six year old is rather uncommon after all. I feel myself



turn, see the biggest rock of all looming in front of me. It grows bigger and bigger as I hurtle towards it. I suddenly know. This is it. This is the rock that takes my life.

My life isn't flashing before my eyes. Isn't that what's supposed to happen? Images dance around me, but they are not memories. I see my mama scolding me for not listening to her, Poppy lying stiller than still, and a yellow cat running around my head. I blink the taunting faces away, ghosts of people and things I will never see again. The rock moves closer, and I ponder swimming away, but by now Death is surely already here, waiting to pluck me up from the water. I push a last bit of air from my chest and loosen my body as much as possible. Here we go.

(To be Continued)

It was the first day of Marianne's school for troubled misfits when I saw them. Twins. Almost identical except that one was black, and the other white. They had the same nose, the same chin, even the same chocolate brown colored eyes.

I never found out what they had done to wind up here, but it wasn't that hard to guess. Alexandria, with his eyes full of dreams and with a body for change, probably just showed up as he is. Narcissus, who was named so because their parents didn't appreciate them standing up for themselves, I could imagine was kicked out for the same reason.

You don't get sent to Marianne's for no reason. The school was made to convert Canadian citizens into cis, law abiding christians. In reality though, because they aren't allowed to perform corporal or mental punishment in response to us breaking the rules, it's become a safe place. A haven where we can all come together and get an education as ourselves, without having to worry about being found out or attacked by peers.

However, for every rule there is an exception, and that exception is Marius and Lupin. They are both trans, and quite proud of the fact. Since I was sent here as an Ally, according to them my presence at this school is intolerable. As such, they have made it their mission to make me feel as unwelcome as possible.

All new students have to stand up in front of the class and announce both their birth name and the sex that they were born with the first time that they come to class. The idea is to shame us into our bodies, but all it does is give students a platform with which they can rebel right out of the gates. Case in Point: when asked, Narcissus just responded with no, and sat down next to

me. Alexandria followed them with a smile, sat down in the seat behind them, and turned his head to stare out the window.

Immediately Marius stood up and headed towards Narcissus. Everyone in the class knew what she was about to do. We who had evaded that first question all went through the same thing with Marius, yet no one stopped it. She hopped up onto the corner of Narcissus' desk and asked. "So, are you a boy or a girl?"

Narcissus, quite calmly looked up and said, "You can leave now."

"Hey now, come on, we're all on the same team. I just wanted to know so that I could use the right pronouns."

"But that is not what you asked," Narcissus said, "You asked me "If I was a girl or a boy", of which I am neither."

"Don't tell me you're one of those non-binaries. You can't make up a gender and then claim to be it. You have to chose. So come on. Girl or Boy."

Fist clenched, eyes blazing with fire, Narcissus shot from their chair. They looked like they was either about to speak or murder Marius, I'm not sure which. Before they could get the chance, a voice from from behind interrupted them.

"I am a boy."

It was Alexandria who had answered. He gave his Narcissus a long look, no longer smiling, and looked back up at Marius.

'I am a boy,' he repeated.

Alexandria's gaze bored into Marius' eyes, until Marius started to slide off the edge of the desk.

Unfortunately, Lupin chose that moment to appear in all his royal glory. He stood next to Alexandria and gave him a wink.

"Of course you are," He purred, putting his manicured nails on Alexandria's desk. "You wouldn't be here if you weren't. Only so-called Allies would be dirty enough to try and sneak in here with their supposed "support."

This last comment was, quite obviously directed towards me, as was the glare he shot me afterwards. I had become used to his passive aggressive digs, but Narcissus had not. They wheeled on him, finger pointing, fists clenched, looking to the world like a lion ready to pounce.

"I am this close," they showed with their fingers, "to punching you in the face. There isn't a certain list of criteria that one has to follow to be considered part of the community. You only have to accept. That is the point of us fighting for our rights, yes? To be accepted? We're at this school because no one else wants us. We were all kicked out of our homes for being ourselves and helping others, and that is the only thing that matters. We are all that we have left until we turn 18 and we can leave to be our own people. So you two," they indicated Marius and Lupin, "can stop acting like children and go and sit down on your seats before the principal comes out and we get in trouble."

With that they finally sat down. Alexandria reached over, patted Narcissus on the shoulder, then returned to staring out the window.

The Young Rebels  
by Talia Wiens

Without a backwards glance, I melted into the shadows of the forest while the Queen's soldiers blundered after me. They were doing their best at being quiet, but we'd been playing cat and mouse for three days now; they really weren't that good. Once I got further away, I'd shake them off my trail for good. For now, I was leaving subtle hints so they wouldn't get suspicious.

I took a left, then backtracked a little ways, leaving no tracks. Quietly, I scrambled up a tree to take a short break and grab a bite to eat. With the soldiers being so close, I'd had no time to rest. Three of the four soldiers were the typical 'I've been trained for fighting not stalking through the woods', but there was something different about the fourth one . . .

I could hear them arguing where my footprints disappeared. As they reached some sort of agreement their voices faded away.

Sighing to myself, I slid down the tree and headed in the direction of the soldiers. I had to get ahead of them again or they'd think they had lost my trail.

As I neared the place where I had originally veered off, I glanced down. Only three sets of footprints continued on.

"Kelsey!" A child's voice called out as a young boy crashed through the bushes heading straight for me. Aidan? What was he doing here? I saw the movement behind the tree a moment too late. The fourth soldier had Aidan by the scruff of his neck before I could say a word.

"Kelsey," he drawled, "as in Kelsey Whistren, leader of the Young Rebels, most well-known insurgent, and the Keeper of the Key?"

I shrugged my shoulders, "So what if I am?"

He then turned to a flailing Aidan, “And would this be your younger brother, rumoured to have been murdered alongside your parents? The one whose body was never found?”

I shoved down the memories that threatened to surface and looked the soldier in the eye.

“Doesn’t your queen tell you who you’re after, or are you just supposed to bring back proof of my demise like in the fairytale?” I must’ve hit a nerve because his face turned a lovely shade of red and his grip on the hilt of his sword tightened.

Maybe I should have left it at that, but I added, “You know, your queen must really think I’m special to send someone other than a common soldier after me. What do you do, her hard-to-catch cases?”

I had at least one of my knives within easy reach and could have had it out and through him before he knew what was going on, but he was holding Aidan in such a way that I would have to risk injuring him. That was a risk I wasn’t going to take.

“I could have killed you any time over the last three days,” he growled, “but Her Majesty wants you alive for questioning.” He smirked and glanced at Aidan, “I don’t see what’s stopping me from taking you now, though, and I have your brother as bonus.”

“We’ll see about you taking me,” I remarked, “but I’ve got some valuable information if you let the boy go.”

“Information,” he laughed, “we have all the information we need.”

I raised an eyebrow and Aidan tried to cover up a giggle. The soldier looked from one of us to the other and seemed to reconsider.

“I’ll let the boy down after you tell me your so-called information.”

“Absolutely not. I learned a long time ago not to trust soldiers, or for that matter, any adults. Let him go. He won’t move, will you?” I asked.

“No sir,” Aidan exclaimed. We had done this so many times in training; I could tell he had been itching for the opportunity.

The soldier dropped Aidan in a pile on the ground. Aidan picked himself up and stood completely still watching the exchange.

“Your information?” the soldier prompted.

“Well, let me see...” On the ‘me’, Aidan dove for the soldier’s legs. The soldier had been focused on me; he hadn’t expected an attack from the other side. He saw Aidan coming out of the corner of his eye, but couldn’t react in time, though Aidan’s maneuver wasn’t quite enough to get him down. As the soldier turned on him, Aidan scrambled away. I pulled out two knives and moved in closer.

“Going after the boy now?” I taunted from behind. The soldier spun around as I tossed a knife to Aidan, who caught it one-handed. Apparently he had been practicing. He beamed at me, then focused his attention on the fray. It was now two against one. Two children, but still, two.

I had the soldier pinned against a tree, knife at his throat. Between the two of us, his sword had flown out of his hand and was now useless on the ground.

Over my shoulder I asked Aidan, “Do we kill him or leave him alive to tell the story of what the Young Rebels can do?” I could see the answer in his eyes even before he said anything.

We moved on and I knelt down so I was the same height as Aidan. I looked him straight in the eyes, “Go tell Florence to move all the children out of the city to the safe house. I’ll shake

off these soldiers and meet you there. Tell only Florence and James what you saw today. If I'm not there in four days, they need to move everyone at least to Farlee."

"Right away, General," Aidan gave a small salute, then turned to leave. He turned back and hesitantly asked, "You have a brother?"

"Had. Now hurry, I hear the other soldiers approaching." I shook my head sadly as he disappeared into the forest. He's far too young for this . . . we all are.



## Paper Things

I first started writing when I was three years old.  
They never taught me, I was never told how,  
All I knew was that I was sold on the idea of happy endings.  
Because they,  
They were real to me  
And existed not only on paper  
But in the concrete foundation of my existence.

I grew up in a concrete world with plastic friends  
Who loved me  
But not really,  
And couldn't be knocked down as easily  
And didn't feel things as deeply,  
And didn't love music and art and reading  
And everything real.  
I escaped into my paper fantasies  
Every day.

I was six when I learned about magic.  
Magic was a real thing to me,

A paper being that made everything

Beautiful and sparkling.

He shielded me from a world where people

Just didn't understand me,

Didn't know me,

Didn't like me,

Didn't know what went on inside my paper head.

He hid in paper within the spines of the novels that would become the bane of

My existence.

I delved into my paper world with my paper friends

And learned about

The paper things that hold the world together.

I learned that love is a paper emotion

And that plastic things like

Angry people and the media

Don't matter that much.

I was fourteen when I started to write again.

I had started to realize that magic

Was only an illusion, a paper thing

And that

It didn't really exist.

And perhaps that is what made me need it even more.

I covered my concrete world in paper

So that I didn't have to see the devastation around me;

I stared blindly at the people who gave in to the pressure,

And hid from the people who tried to do the same to me.

I tried to hide from them.

I tried to hide from them.

I tried to hide.

I was fourteen

When I knew

That my plastic friends were leaving me

To be with other plastic people

And that I was alone in my concrete world.

I started to create my own paper world

Where I

Was an important person

And where people understood my paper thoughts, and

The concrete world disappeared behind

My paper one.

Some people asked me how I

Made it through the day

With such optimism

But I knew they wouldn't understand.

I was fifteen

When I was first told

That I was beautiful

By the same plastic person who

Tore me up a little while later.

And my heart floated back to me in shreds

And a gust of wind could've knocked me down.

I was told that I could never get my happy ending

And that it was my fault

And I knew then that happy endings were not a concrete thing like I had thought

But they weren't a paper thing either.

They existed in the stories that I loved,

But I was starting to realize that the idea of a happy ending is just a really shitty way of covering  
up the fact that everything ends,

And that I'd rather have a mezzo-happy continuation than a happy ending anyhow.

A broken paper doll,  
Tearstained and  
Crumpled and  
Torn in a few places,  
Ripped in half and taped back together  
With promises for the future.  
I wrote Happy on my face every day,  
Not because I was trying to  
Cover anything up but because  
I have a responsibility  
To choose who I am.

And I am happy.

I am the broken paper girl who  
Has been coloured by  
The dreamers  
And the artists  
And the writers  
And those few rotten kids who don't know how to colour in the lines.  
I am a rainbow of my own experiences

And I am just learning that  
I am allowed to colour myself too.  
So I wrote Happy on my face every day  
Because I have a responsibility to choose who I am.

I was sixteen when I realized that  
I am a broken paper girl  
But that's okay,  
Because I've learned over the years  
That the best things -  
The realest, most authentic things -  
Reside within  
The depths of a book  
Or on  
The possibility of a blank page.  
And although plastic things like  
Hate,  
Negativity,  
Oppression,  
Last longer on the earth  
And won't crumble or dissolve in the rain,  
It's the paper things that really stay with you.

I was sixteen when I realized that

I could make people feel good about themselves,

And that

I had the power to make people feel things;

Real things,

Good things,

Bad things,

Paper things.

And so I picked up my pen,

And I started to write.

The whirl of floors whizzed by and pristine white elevator doors opened to reveal a sparkling room with no chairs or tables, encased by a single, wrap-around window. Forty or so children in their early teens filed out of the elevator and into the room, followed by a very tired looking adult man. Waiting for them was a pleasant looking woman of medium build, a bright, fake smile illuminating a young, botox face.

“Hello, children!” she chirped in a well rehearsed manner. “My name is Miss Charles, and you are all about to walk the footsteps of history and witness the historical structure of the country you all call home. Can anyone tell me what this event was called?” Bright pink eyes scanned the rainbow-haired crowd. A hand went up. “Yes, child?” A small boy with fire red hair stepped forward.

“The war of Man, Miss”

“Very good!” their guide bubbled. “And can you tell me anymore about it?” The boy took a moment to think, screwing up his freckled face as he searched for his words before drawing a large breath.

“The war of man was a fourteen-year war fought between 2091 and 2105, between North America and The European Union, allied with Russia and China. The weapon of choice on both sides was nuclear arms.” The boy's speaking rivaled a paragraph in its format. “Over seven billion people died, primarily in the United States



and here, in the city of San Francisco, which was used as a navy port and military prison.

Their guide threw a look to the teacher of the class, who shrugged. It wasn't his business what children learned in their spare time, curriculum or not.

"Yes! Very good..." She trailed, moving towards the giant window. "Now can anyone tell me what they see when they look down?" Hands flew up, but another small boy bounced to the window without being called on, and peered down, squinting his large purple eyes.

"I see buildings, grass, trees, hovercars and food domes, but I can't see any people because we're too high up" He remained where he was as the teacher turned to the rest of the class.

"That's right! Two particular items you mentioned did not exist during the war. Food domes, and hover cars. Before then, all food was grown in the ground, and cars drove on asphalt roads, crisscrossing the world and causing pollution. The invention of hover cars to transport soldiers faster, and synthetic soil to grow food where there was none to feed billions of hungry mouths during a time of rationing were socioeconomic triumphs of the war." Miss Charles took a second for dramatic effect before adding, "Follow me" And once again they were off, speeding hundreds of floors towards the ground to walk among relics of a time long passed.

A young girl with bright blue hair ran to catch up with their guide.

"Miss Charles!!!" She trilled, slowing down alongside her. "Why are we learning about this war if it happened so long ago? Why are there monuments and celebrations, when none are still alive?"

The taller of them smiled. What inquisitive children these were!

"We must learn about the past, and what lead to our conflicts, to avoid repeating our mistakes in the future. By learning what went wrong, the future can be made right." The girl chewed on this information for a moment.

"But they're dead!"

"They are dead. And what did they die for?" The girl closed her mouth and fell back, lost in thought and confusion, just as they came to their first piece of history. Before them stood half of a building. "Does anyone know what happened here?" Silence was observed as the children took in their surroundings.

"No? Well. In 2097, an American fighter jet crashed into this building in order to save the nation. Spies from the enemy had planted an explosive in the cockpit of the plane, which was set to go off as the plane landed. The pilot, Commander James Conroy, flew his plane into an abandoned building as soon as he was aware of the device, which then blew up, killing only him. His name is remembered as a war hero." After a moment of reflection, they continued on down the port side of Vanness Street.

Turning right, they walked a ways, approaching what looked like a ship yard with vehicles in the water.

"This is the U-boat yard! The United States Navy deemed it necessary to keep the submarines used during the war as a reminder of what we accomplished using them. Submarines are underwater vehicles which, during the war, were used to sneak up on enemy fleets and tap into their radios, and have warnings to protect our country against attacks. These machines have likely saved many lives in their service." She looked at the barnacle-encrusted U-boat directly ahead of them lovingly and carried on.

"Beyond the U-Boat yard and straight ahead is the island known as...?"

"Alcatraz!!!" came the cheer of the students.

"Very good! Alcatraz. In 1963, President Kennedy closed the island, called The Rock, an island prison that helped the nation's nastiest. It stood for many decades as a museum, but was reopened as a functional military prison, once again holding criminals. Of war, this time. People meaning to do our entire country harm. It has now returned to a museum, with a rich history."

"As you have heard today, many brave men and women fought for the safety and luxuries we have today. If you take anything from this tour, take the knowledge that the war has not ended, and is being fought everyday. People wishing to harm each other and take from the helpless. It's down to you to ensure this never happens again.

“A round of applause for Miss Charles!” The class teacher cried, and began herding the children towards the sidewalk and back to their lives, hoping what they saw today will stay in the past.