

## The Never Ending Circle

Trapped in an endless deep loop,  
Just waiting to regain your troops,  
Surrounded in a piercing darkness  
Feeling like every move you make is a weakness,

The yellow light blinding your eyes is a barricade,  
Keeping all the tears and emotions in one tight braid,  
You can feel the ever-hungry eyes as you walk down the halls,  
Feeling like you might just fall.

And finally you find your friends,  
But you're scared one day it will all come to an end.

They are the blood pumping through your veins,  
Keeping you alive no matter what the pain.  
They are the air supporting your heart,  
Without them you'd surely fall apart.

And yet as you sit down that day,  
You feel alone as ever in the grey,  
Your hands working mindless as your mind,  
And yet you still feel so blind.

And as you stand your legs somehow support you,  
Because you feel like at any moment everything could undo.

You feel sadness always lingering,  
And the voices in your head always whispering,  
Almost like a trail behind you,  
The fake smiles are just a tattoo.

You feel like a pulled grenade,  
Ready to explode at any careless invade,

Hoping that one day someone will come save you from your fears,  
But knowing you'd never be good enough and it would only bring you tears.

And yet at the end of the day we all put on a smile,  
And keep everything boarded up in a pile.

Finally the day's over and you head back home,  
Yet it's no better when the noise is trapped under a dome,  
Because the voices in your head won't stop echoing around,  
And all that ever does is tear you down.

You feel defeated,  
Even though you're depleted,  
Sticks and stones,  
May break these bones,

But words cut deeper than swords can ever reach,  
Can suck out your happiness just like a leech,

Can shut you out from the world faster than a gun,  
Can make you believe something faster than you can run.

Yet no one can see how it's affecting your brain,  
When you can't find out: what is their aim?

When you lay your head to rest each night,  
The images and thoughts give you a fright,  
Because the thoughts just won't stop turning,  
And deep down inside they won't stop burning.

Finally you drift off to a restless sleep,  
But you're still stuck in the endless deep,  
Hoping that one day you'll be free,  
And grow up to the person you're meant to be.

The She-Warrior

She was a warrior.

She didn't need the others to tell her.

She already knew from the scars,  
That freckled her body like a sky full of stars,  
Reminding her of the battles she had won.

She was a fighter.

She didn't need the admiration of the others.

She already knew from the echoing screams and voices trapped in her head,  
That filled her ears with cruel dread,  
Reminding her of those who had fallen.

She was a survivor.

She didn't need the glory the others gave her.

She already knew from the nightmares that sprinkled her mind every dark night,  
Making her remember when she had felt fright.  
Reminding her that the only enemy is fear itself.

She already knew she was a warrior.

And she didn't need the others to assure.

Because every time she was alone,  
A warm tear traveling down her soft cheek would remind her.

Lily Brown, Gr.10 Westsyde Secondary

## Aurora Rose

There I lay asleep on the top of a hill all alone on a fluffy bed. A golden sword lay at my feet and a red rose in my hand. Even though I was asleep I could still sense, feel and see everything. There was fire everywhere, people lay on the ground showing no sign of life and there amidst the chaos I saw her, Maleficent, the evil being that had cursed me when I was just a babe.

I could still hear my fairy Godmother say to me "It is your destiny to defeat the Destroyer," when I turned back to face the woman, she had taken a new form. In the place of the wretched witch was a bloodthirsty dragon. She towered above me, growling and hissing as you picture a dragon would.

With a whispery voice she beckoned me closer and closer. So close I could feel her hot fiery breath on my face. My only thought was that I was going to die. "Help!" I shrieked. Suddenly, I woke up hot and sweaty with my 12 Godmothers hovering above me muttering things like, "Oh the poor dear!" and "It probably was just another nightmare." "Stop fussing over me", I said, "Today is my day because it is my 16th birthday!" Little did I know that the special birthday that I was so looking forward to would bring with it a prison that would hold me captive for the next one hundred years.

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**Lily Brown, Gr.10, Westsyde Secondary****Aurora Rose**

Many people have heard my story up until now but what they don't know is that the prince didn't save me from the slumber I was condemned to after pricking my finger that unfortunate 16th birthday, for we hadn't even met. A prince breaking my spell with "true love's kiss" was only a bedtime story told to soothe young children. When I was born the jealous Maleficent cast a spell on my life, cursing me to prick my finger while picking a rose near the castle and fall instantly dead. Merryweather, one of my fairy Godmothers, tried in vain to revoke the spell. Her powers were not strong enough to remove it completely, but she was able to lighten the curse. So I would not die but rather sleep for one hundred years alongside all those in my kingdom. As long as I held the rose, my sleep would be broken when a century had passed.

**100 YEARS LATER**

Smoke! I smell smoke. Fire! I see fire. Wait. I could... I could see! I was awake! I could move my limbs! I could drop the cursed rose! I felt as if I could fly! Hold on... fire, smoke, thorns, people on the ground. This could not be the kingdom I once knew. What was going on? Maleficent!! She was behind all this.

I suddenly had an urge to go to the palace where I was born. I looked down at the rose I'd held so long. The magic of the spells had hardened its delicate petals into crystal and it shone with a golden brilliance. I placed it in my robe, grabbed a sword for protection and set off.

**Lily Brown, Gr.9, Westsyde Secondary****Aurora Rose**

As I crossed the grand entrance of the palace I saw a dark figure turn toward me and say, "Oh how nice of you to show up! Now I finally get that perfect battle I've been planning." It was Maleficent. "Why you..." I screamed. "You've been planning this ever since you knew I was born. Right? You just wanted to get rid of the royal family so you could come in here and rule my kingdom. Well, I won't have it! I will avenge my kingdom if it's the last thing I do!" "Oh but darling. It will be the last thing you do. Have you met me in my newest form?" said Maleficent with glee!

A flash of green light shot from Maleficent's body. The next thing I saw sent shivers down my spine. It was just like in my dream. Maleficent had turned into a hideous dragon. I grabbed at my sword and stabbed it into the ground, "Ahhhhhhhhhhh!!" Maleficent shrieked. The sword was jammed through her scaly foot. I yanked it out hard but as I did I watched in amazement as the wound instantly healed. My anger surged as I slashed wildly at any part of her within my reach. These gashes too closed almost as instantly as they'd been opened. "Honey, nothing you can do can kill meeee," she hissed.

A thought then flashed through my mind, "If she put me into a spell, I can do the same to her. But instead of only for 100 years it will be forever!" This was my last chance to show Maleficent she had made a huge mistake in casting her spell on me. I threw the golden rose at her. Its tiny thorn pricking her scale-covered finger as it fell. "You fool!" she screamed in agony. "Do you know what this does? Magic reversed is nothing but a curse! It will kill meeeeeeeeeee!" Her giant form writhed, withered and shrunk until she lay dead before me in her regular form. Just an ugly wretched witch.

**Lily Brown, Gr.9, Westsyde Secondary**

**Aurora Rose**

I turned my head and saw my parents running toward me. "Oh darling is that you," My mother said on the verge of tears. "Yes, yes! Oh how I've missed you!" I said. We all embraced and I saw my 12 godmothers and a man standing behind them. "Oh honey, let me introduce prince John, he has been searching for you for 100 years." said my father. John smiled warmly and took my hand, 14 months later we were married and had a baby on the way.

Well, I guess I was wrong about the prince and true loves' kiss being only a bedtime story. Maybe I do get a happy ending. Now that I've told my story I guess there's not much else to say except for "And we all lived happily ever after".

Connor used to like it when it snowed. It gave him a good reason to stay indoors, huddled near his T.V., usually rewatching old eSports movies like *Free to Play* or *King of Chinatown*. He enjoyed the beauty of winter, of looking out over Manchester at all the buildings covered in snow. Nowadays, though, it only reminded him of the accident.

He kept telling himself to stop being so bitter over it. No one was really at fault, anyways. The other driver's auto drive feature just glitched out. He knew that being angry wouldn't solve anything, but it was still hard for him to forget the person who took his arm.

The next thing he remembered after the accident was waking up in a hospital bed. He looked around and found an electronic clock on the wall that told him the date: January 12, 2036. He'd been asleep for three weeks. The next revelation came when a nurse came into his room to tell him that due to the severity of the incident, they had to amputate his arm, but because he was insured, they gave him a bionic one in its place. The news devastated Connor, as it meant that he had not only lost his arm, but his future as well.

Connor had dreams of making it big in eSports ever since he was little. He would watch and rewatch famous matches from the past, like Justin Wong versus Daigo Umehara or Adam Ramirez versus Arman Hanjani. He enjoyed the thrill of the sport, and the time and dedication the players put into the games they played to be the very best. He wanted to be just like them. He would practice for hours on end. And he was showing signs of success, too. Every month he would sign up for as many local tournaments as he could find, winning most of them. He had



even applied for a spot in Evo, one of the most well-known and respected tournaments in the industry. It was in those weeks pending his acceptance that he lost his arm.

In the weeks that followed, Connor stopped going to tournaments. He stopped playing altogether, in fact. It would take him years to get his arm to respond to his commands as fast as his old one, and with only one arm, there was no way for him to compete. Slowly, he started to drift away from his dream altogether.

On one snowy night in February, Connor heard a knock on his door. This was bizarre, as no one had come to see him in quite a long time. He got up from his spot on the couch to check who it was, and upon opening the door, he found it to be his old friend, Edward. He and Edward had been good friends since grade school, and they had bonded over their love of eSports. Lately, however, Connor had not seen much of Edward, due to his accident. Connor wondered what Edward could want at this time of day.

“Hey, Connor. Long time no see!”

“Good evening, Ed. What are you doing here this late in the day?”

“Just to tell you that I’ve got two tickets to tomorrow night’s football game, and one of them has your name on it!”

Oh great, Connor thought. So he’s here to cheer me up.

“Sorry, Ed. I’ve already made plans for tomorrow.”

“Could those plans, by any chance, be to sit in front of the telly all night watching *Heathers* for the millionth time?”

Connor didn't need Edward to tell him that. Morgan showed him with her playing. By the end of the game, she had scored four goals, one with a bicycle kick. Connor was entranced by her performance.

After the game, Edward drove Connor back home. At home, Connor thought about what he'd seen. Morgan was amazing, and she had it twice as bad as him. This made him realize that he hadn't lost everything in his accident. He realized that if he gave it enough time, he could relearn his past abilities, and once more rise to become the very best he could be. After that day, he made it his quest to continue his dream to become the best eSports player the world would ever know.

Serina Foster  
Norkam Secondary  
Grade 10

## It's the Little Things

When it rains it pours. That has always been my experience, at least, it all comes in tidal waves. The upside, I guess, is that they take longer to form, and I can last a while in the sun, before another one washes over. I always wondered which was preferable, less for longer, or a lot fast. This is used in so many areas of life, and has always intrigued me.

I never thought I was abused, because I wasn't. I don't care what anyone says, this is what I have decided. I never starved, or had nothing to my name, and, most important of all, I have *always* had options. Choices. Places that I could go when at my lowest, in need. I did have it a bit rougher than most, bad luck seems to follow me around. But bad things have to happen, for good to happen too, and they have to happen to someone. I was okay with that burden, if others were okay. I guess I always figured if you were surrounded in darkness, then light seemed so much brighter, and always being in the light made the dark seem so much darker. I would rather be in the dark anyway.

It all started, as bad things normally do, with a loss of control. My father, he has always been angry, had horrible self control. He's sick, honestly. To this day I still believe that he is ill. But he likes himself better that way, and that is the problem. Growing up, he never stopped talking. I had to speak between his breaths. I learned to talk fast, or else he got mad. Once, he lost control worse than he ever had. It wasn't even the worst time he had hurt me, and I wondered how he had more control and hurt me more, but I never got an answer. It was just the only time he was far enough gone to actually leave bruises. I was devastated, when I got home. I still don't understand how he lost control of himself every day, and it still hurt so bad, every single time. That was always his greatest flaw, control. He controlled everyone around him but himself. I was not permitted friends, to speak to family, or even call those I truly loved family. I wasn't allowed to leave the house or go anywhere, ever. There was no escape. The day that he

Serina Foster

## It's the Little Things

Norkam Secondary

Grade 10

finally left bruises was a day I had *hoped* for for so long, I could finally get the proper help, but now I know I would have gotten it either way. My mother called social services. They scheduled an appointment for a few days later, and we waited, in horrible, gut-clenching fear he would find out. A month later, my mother picked me up to school in our broken van. It broke down about a dozen times in the mere half a year we owned it, and nothing, not a thing, worked in it, and it always smelled of gas. I hated having no air conditioning in the summer, and I hated not having easy access to water. She had told me we couldn't go back, and the few items she was able to grab were with us in the van; our only possessions. I climbed in that worn-out thing, and we were off, never looking back. My brother, Ryan, a mere seven at the time, was with us. We had to share a bed, which was hell on my mother, who had been in an accident a few weeks prior, and had badly injured her back. We had no money, and were in serious debt, and all of our savings, mine included, had gone into mom's medical bills. We lived off of canned soup and Kraft Dinner. I can't stand the taste of the stuff now. We lived in that damn minivan for over a month; and I don't regret it. I never will. That doesn't mean I have to like that it happened.

It took months, but we finally got my mother's settlement for the accident. Without that, we would probably still be there. We were able to pick up our broken lives, after that. The tidal wave had crashed on the shore, and was drawing back out at last! Many people started to help us, after that. We had gotten a home, at that point, owned by the government, for cheaper rent; "a safe house". That was the start of our good fortune. There were so many people that helped us from there. They gave us the smallest things, an old set of dishes, a bag of hand-me-down clothes, or a set of chairs from the garage. As they say, I guess, "One man's trash is another man's treasure," and treasures they were. From the simple, small things that so many gave us, we were able to construct new lives, and I got to start my new school as a new person - a true

Serina Foster

## It's the Little Things

Norkam Secondary

Grade 10

fresh start. We had everything we needed, we had money, and crawled out of the debt that had drowned us. We were safe, and happy, and water when we were thirsty, a shower, and even a toilet - outhouses were horrible at rest stops. We slowly learned what it was like to have real friends, and the toxic people that has surrounded us were pushed away. We talked to our family, they supported us, despite their own troubles that plagued them as well. It feels amazing to finally learn that respect cannot ever be demanded - not truly, at least. It can only be earned. Things may still be figuring themselves out, even now, but I know that we will be fine, because we always have choices, and now people to support us through them. As long as we don't fall off of the tightrope, and that line doesn't snap, I will continue to be okay. The light is shining brighter than ever, in the darkness, and I doubt it will ever be pitch black again. I can now look toward my future with hope, instead of fear of what tomorrow brings. I have more choices in my life than ever before, and it is only growing with each new step that I take. The storm is passing, here comes the sun.

Rowan Jones  
Grade 10  
SKSS  
eight//8,  
1

*a letter to sea-torn fighters*

we know, better than anyone,  
the sort of damage  
sea salt & spray does

those of us who are home again  
know how easy the sea returns  
(miles onshore)

waves crash against rock  
253 kilometres from  
this home but  
sometimes i hear them  
crash against my window-pane instead

sometimes i catch sight of  
white tips in the distance  
and find its reminders on  
my doorstep

i am done with the sea,  
i settled my pact long ago  
    the sea is not done with me

what hurts more is seeing  
more of us in the breakers still  
i worry the winds will snatch my voice away  
before i can call to them

i try not to worry;  
they will swim back if they can  
all i can do is hope they hear me  
    (i worry anyways)  
and hold tight to those around me while the sea  
foams around our ankles

the square root of anything, squared  
is the thing itself.  
apply this to anything, and  
you find yourself a whole again

what happens when you square (root)  
something, someone that already has pieces missing?  
logic states they return exactly as they left;  
damaged.

there is no quick fix for trauma,

$\sqrt{x^2}$

Rowan Jones  
Grade 10  
SKSS  
eight//8,  
2

no reset, restart button,  
no second chances.

time is said to heal all wounds,  
even if that time is eons long

it is not the only healer,  
sit still for a year and you will not have changed,  
action is needed to move forward

think about it like this;  
time · action = healing

think about it like this;  
time(friends) · action ≈ healing, hopefully

it is impossible to account  
for every variable,  
there is no control in this experiment  
our hypothesis is lost under mounds of failed attempts

this is imperfect.

this works, i think  
progress is slow but it is, at least  
progress

you see it in less of a flinch  
(sight of a red truck < ability to breathe)  
in the acknowledgement of damage  
(maybe i am hurt, maybe i am)  
in the use of calming mechanisms  
(necklace = racing heartbeat, slowed)

the way is hard but i am getting there,  
slowly.

*working on wings to fly*

we are all working on wings to fly / desperately hoping for something other than icarus' fate // we all know wings break so some build them stronger, / study the sky // bad winds and worse weather / tear even the best flyers from the sky, sometimes / some rebuild, crafting wings from steel that were once just feathers / some crash against the cliffs, the sea and fall / some stay grounded, after // we hope they will fly again // there will never be a day where the sky is free from dangers but / if we keep from flying for fear of that / we will never be able to leave

*pipe dreams*

prompt: pipe dreams

Rowan Jones  
Grade 10  
SKSS  
eight//8,  
3

prompt: where do you see yourself in twenty years  
prompt: what career do you want

answer: dead in the ground / who stands a chance against the wind / when they're built out of  
half-remembered dreams and borrowed strength  
answer: who needs a career when they're six feet under  
answer: a grave digger, god know i have enough practice with my own  
answer: all my life is a pipe dream / all my life is floating away

*dead saints*

saint mary is dead,  
saint peter, saint paul have followed suit

all our saints are dead and gone,  
we are held only in each other's ruined hands  
*to die a tragedy*  
saint maria has abandoned us, and now  
we have no one left  
but each other

except;  
saints die & go & pass & leave us here alone but  
so long as i have your hand to clasp between mine,  
i will be able to breathe

saint raphael is dead  
yet here i sit with you,  
here we all sit together

here we break our bread and fast and pray,  
we laugh and smile and sing and talk  
here we live

all our saints are dead  
but we are not  
so we sit and watch the sunrise  
our saints cannot see

*flowers that grow in dead bodies*

**when** you find my body,  
lay me to rest in a forest or a field,  
put a handful of seeds in my ribcage,  
do not look back when you walk away

let the roses grow in the **absence** of my heart  
give my spine & hip bones to the wildflowers  
i have no need of them



Rowan Jones  
Grade 10  
SKSS  
eight//8,  
4

and to whoever **comes** across my body,  
years

later  
do not disturb who i was,  
my bones are still weary  
from all the weight i carry now

so let them rest,  
let them **rest**

*favourite scars*

i have never / been good / at self preservation / and  
i think it shows / in my scars

*(i think i think i thinkthinkthinkthink t h i n k)*  
as a kid i /

picked scabs until they were / moon craters  
resting on my / hollow / not hollow / bones  
they remind me of who / i was  
when i was / younger

*(whole)*

and / *(andandandandand)* / happy  
tethers / to my / unorbiting / mind  
that / thin ks too /

/ much.

i know the ones that matt/er to me, /  
now /

*(ring finger*

*left hip*

*knee*

*forehead)*

sometimes

*(sometimetimetimetime t i m e s)*

i / worry

that when they / fade so will / i

, ligaments retreating

from bone /

hyper *(hyperperperper pi per)* active / scar / tissue

sloughing with no re placement

off

left behind

*freckled skin*

i will paint constellations into life

with your freckles,

show you the beauty of the night sky

outlined against your cheekbones,

against the bridge of your nose,

Rowan Jones  
Grade 10  
SKSS  
eight//8,  
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your shoulder blade

i will center polaris on your browbone;  
the guides of ursa major span space on your chest

*the only thing i need to point myself home is you*

cassiopeia sits lovely & frozen on your skull,  
perseus three starlengths away

i will orient myself to your light,  
find home an ocean away

## My Best Friend's Advice

I groaned in frustration at my physics test before letting my head fall on top of it. I was 90% sure that we had never learned any of these concepts. After a moment, I looked over at Mary, who was leaning back in her chair with her feet perched on the table, cleaning her nails.

"Psst," I whispered, "What's the answer to number 7?"

She had finished school years ago, but my teachers never seemed to notice her coming into class to hang out with me.

"I really shouldn't be helping you cheat you know."

"Please, I'm not smart like you. I'm going to fail if you don't help," I begged.

She gave a long suffering sigh, "Fine. But don't blame me if you get in trouble. The answer is D."

"Thank you!" I beamed.

I finished the test mere seconds before the bell rang. As Mary and I were handing the test into the teacher, Adelaide ran up to me.

"Oh my word! That test was the hardest thing I have ever taken in my entire life! Did you find it hard to, or am I just an idiot?" she said laughing.

Before I could answer, my phone vibrated in my pocket, alerting me to a message. Curious, I took it out and saw a message from Mary that said "Don't tell her how hard you found it. She's trying to find something to bad mouth you with." I looked back up at Mary in confusion, but she just gave a slight shake of her head.

Adelaide playfully poked me in the arm, "Hello? Anyone in there?"

"N-no, this class is super easy. I didn't think the test was very hard at all," I said quickly.

"Lucky you then! Well, I'm going to go to my next class. See you later!"

She quickly hurried off as I turned to Mary with my eyebrow raised.

"What was that about? I've known Adelaide for years, she'd never do anything that shady."

"I'm sorry I have to be the one to tell you this, but she's been bad mouthing you for months."

"What? That's unbelievable," I frowned. "Well, at least this way I know not to hang out with her anymore."

The rest of the day passed in a blur. I found it hard to concentrate in class when some of my closest friends were so untrustworthy. It would be hard, but I was going to have to stop talking to them. Besides, I didn't need any of them when I had Mary. She'd never do anything to hurt me.

Once school was over, I headed towards my bus, Mary by my side. I didn't know where she lived, but she spent so much time at my house we might as well have been siblings. Just as I was about to get on, she suddenly put her hand on my shoulder.

"Don't get on," she said. "I recognize that bus driver; he was accused of purposefully crashing his bus last month."

I looked up at him and he smiled at me, motioning for me to get on. Slowly, I backed up, never taking my eyes off of him. Once we were out of sight, Mary took her hand off my shoulder. Smiling at her, I prepared for the two hour walk ahead of me.

Once I arrived home, I headed to the fridge, petting my dog, Whiskers, on the way. I opened the door, grabbed an apple, and took a bite out of it. Immediately, Mary was at my side.

“No!” she cried, “What have you done? It’s infested with parasites!”

Paranoid, I spit it out and ran to the sink to wash my mouth out.

“That’s not enough! You have to throw everything up or they’ll spread to your organs!”

Heeding her warning, I ran to the bathroom as fast as I could and proceeded to spend the next few minutes throwing everything up. Once I had finished, Mary hugged me and murmured, “It’s okay, I’m here for you.”

That night I went to bed early, knowing I would have to get up sooner if I was going to walk to school. The next day, I avoided packing a lunch since Mary told me that everything in the fridge was infected. At school, I avoided all of my old friends and ignored them when they confronted me on it.

As weeks passed, I grew increasingly thankful towards Mary. She was constantly protecting me from the dangers around me. I stopped going to school because she told me everyone there was being mind controlled by an alien overlord. I ran away from home because she told me there were shadow people living in my walls. I even ended up putting down my dog because she told me he was possessed by a demon.

One morning, I woke up and something seemed different. It took me a moment to place what it was, as the noise was faint, but I soon realized that it was screaming. However, the more I talked with Mary the louder it became. By the end of the day, I thought it would tear my head in two.

“Shut up!” I screamed at Mary, desperate for any sort of relief.

To my chagrin, she continued to speak and the volume increased. Tears were streaming down my face as I realized what I had to do. Luckily, I was in the kitchen so it was easy to reach out for a knife. Without giving her a chance to react, I turned around and slashed her throat. For one second I enjoyed a glorious moment of silence, and then her body hit the ground. Suddenly, what I had done hit me like a pile of bricks. I collapsed onto my knees, and my eyes filled with tears to the point that I could barely see when, with blood still gushing from her neck, Mary opened her eyes and sat up.

“It’s okay,” she said, “I’m here for you.”