



POWER OF THE PEN 2016 AWARD WINNERS

Presented in partnership by Hamilton Public Library
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Foreword

Self-knowledge is essential not only to writing, but to doing almost anything really well. It allows you to work through from a deep place - from the deep, dark corners of your subconscious mind - Meg Rosoff

On behalf of Hamilton Public Library and our valued community partner, The Hamilton Spectator, we extend our congratulations to the winners of the 22nd Annual Power of the Pen Creative Writing Contest. As a library system, we look forward to this event every year and as always, your stories and poems were inspiring and sincere. We are delighted to share your work with a larger audience through this compilation of winning entries.

This year, more than 200 entries were submitted. Thank you to our talented judges: Mike Alger, Chris Brun, Paddy Chitty, Molly Hayes, Ellen Jaffe, Joanne Levy, Tor Lukasik-Foss, Charles Meanwell, Aimee Reid, Jeff Seffinga, Susan Evans Shaw, Tom Shea, Gisela Sherman and Bettina Von Kampen and the Hamilton Association for the Advancement of Literature, Science and Art judges: Soraya Erian, Eleanore Kosydar, Chris Pannell and Susan Evans Shaw. The Power of the Pen program would not be possible without the generous donation of your time, caring and talent.

We would like to extend a special thank you to our program partner and sponsor, The Hamilton Spectator, for their ongoing support of this important literary program. The Library, School Boards, members of the business community and local community organizations have all worked together to make the Power of the Pen a success story. The success of Power of the Pen would not be possible without the significant contributions of Bryan Prince Bookseller and the Hamilton Association for the Advancement of Literature, Science and Art. We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all involved.

A warm congratulation to everyone who submitted an entry in this year's contest! We are so proud to share in your journeys as writers.

Sincerely,

Lita Barrie
Director, Youth Services & Collections
Hamilton Public Library

Age 12
Poetry, 1st Place

The Spirit of Youth

By Anne Fu

Youth
is the rising sun.
Springing from nothing, it is the first sliver of light,
glittering in the cusp of the soft, sighing skies
lingering, bright and blessed, in its own separate universe,
counting the seconds, before the pale blue of its nest
gives way to burning embers of its final calls,
orchestrating the final clouds, violet against the bruised horizon,
before turning its pale, yearning young face away,
consumed,
by the empty black-and-blue of the frozen, star-speckled night,
to be replaced by the moon.

Youth
is the flight of freedom,
caught in the warm, soft whirlwind of young imaginations,
lifted by the wings that which no one but the children can perceive,
their silken feathers coaxing the giggles on naive faces, bringing them up,
soaring in the beauty of sunset skies
up past the solemn treetops and the dancing horizons,
up beyond the mouths of mountains and the eyes of stars
up into the once forbidden night, the surge of curiosity as their hands reach out to cup the
galaxies,
until they are resting, breathless, in the midst of the cosmos
young eyes on the sacred world below them,
the explosion of life in the empty void,
the beauty of the gentle planet that awaits their arrival once more,
listening to the beating hearts of the sea,
and the sighs of the land,
and each thread that stitches together their world,
before
gravity takes hold and sends them down once more.
Flight shaky and sickened,
wings frozen by the void's cold ice to their backs,
tumbling past the planets, the sky a blur before their eyes,

stars stumbling in the galaxy's cold seas, hands flailing,
thoughts flickering,
searching for the handholds the universe once had given them,
until they descend,
like comets,
their wings a trail of light behind them, fluttering gently
coming to a halt
as they fall into the soil.

Youth
is enjoying the hours of play-pretend,
behind the safety of warm wood fences,
counting the creatures found in each hole and burrow around the young plants,
and taking out the crayons, colouring in our little pipe dreams,
under the placid summer oaks,
so kind to lend us their shade,
watching the dappled sunlight weave through the leaves,
our never-ending saga playing on repeat in our mind's eye,
pausing only to relive the best memories once more.
Our twigs were noble swords,
our swing sets bold steeds,
our backyards and front lawns the kingdom we ruled,
and our friends the comrades we would ride into battle with.
The fascination that this was our world to experience,
our world to conquer,
was something we thought we would never grow old of,
until winter arrived,
the heavens growing tired of our play pretend,
and the earth sinking below the weight of the snow,
glacial breaths whispering promises of returns,
before they bow to welcome its frigid, gentle snowfall.

Youth
is the soft embrace of a mother,
the comfort of falling back into a parent's arms again,
weary from the forbidding winds of reality,
settling into the same crevices that molded a young body,
worn in from the decades of longing and love,
regaining its throne within their hearts.

It is that
perfect,
primal
feeling that each infant is born with:
The warmth of connection,
the breath of life,
the embrace of endearment,
and the spirit of youth.

Age 12
Poetry, 2nd Place

I'll hide, from you, from everything

By Carrie Malkin

I'll hide,
From you.
The one who decided I was not good enough for you,
The one who decided I was your next victim,
The one who took the delicate glass vase that was my feelings, and shattered it.

I'll hide,
From responsibilities.
From everything that needs to be done,
From everything that I have poisoned with my touch,
From everything that has hurt me.

I'll hide,
From the man walking on the street.
Because I am taught to fear every stranger,
Because I am taught to inch away from the innocent man,
Because I am just a girl, and therefore to be seen only as prey.

I'll hide,
From the "cool kids."
Because they are the people who could ruin your life,
Because they have no regard for my feelings,
Because they, the ones failing their classes, have more respect than me, the A plus student.

I'll hide,
From everything.
Because I am taught to fear everything and everyone,
Because I am wrongly judged by society,
Because I am the target, and they are the shooters.

I'll hide,
From speaking my mind,
Because you are too shallow to hear what I have to say,
Because you are the man I am taught to fear,
Because you are better than me.

I'll hide,
And you, the one who has done nothing, will shine.

Age 12

Short Story, 1st Place

Broken Silence

By *Sadhana Jeyakumar*

CHAPTER 1

The mourning silence filled the house, accompanied by the dreadful whispers of the several women seated beside Akhil's mother, each trying to outdo each other in soothing her with reassuring voices that would have worked a few days ago. It had been several days since the incident had taken place yet the memories were still freshly etched in Akhil's mind. The cries of help were still ringing in his ears as he remembered the sight of his father grasping the edge of the hospital bed, his chest bobbing up and down and then falling, not moving. The doctors had rushed to the emergency room where his father as soon as they heard his cries of help. One of the doctors, Dr. Rajput, had been more disappointed at the failure of their treatment than the rest; he was a close friend of his father and couldn't withstand the thought of him letting such a failure occur. It had pained his heart with guilt day and night. Sweat drizzled down on Akhil's forehead as he remembered the tragedy he witnessed before his eyes. Shivering, he turned his attention back to the silence filling the house. It hadn't always been like this before. Rarely silence could be heard in the house and when there was, it was usually during the night or when nobody was inside the house. Silence had never occurred when there were at least twenty people, altogether, in one place.

"He was a good husband wasn't he? Sometimes we fail to understand the reason behind God's decisions in our lives", said one of the ladies seated next to his mother. Beside her, Akhil could see the tall lanky figure of his younger sister, breathing heavily as she leaned against the wall. She too was there when the incident had taken place. Neither of them was able to move as they saw their own father fall into a heap of nothing. His eyes watered just thinking about it. Trying to take it off his mind, he glanced at the empty armchair across the room where his father once used to sit, reading one of the ancient books his grandmother would send him from India.

They had already buried his father in the outskirts of the city where the cemetery was located. He had watched his father's body slowly be pushed underneath the Earth. *Funny* he had thought. He had always wondered why they buried the dead bodies under the earth. His father was born on the earth but lies dead underneath. He remembered all the flowers and prayers people blessed his tomb with.

"Prasad..." a voice suddenly whispered from the doorway of the house. Everyone in the house stopped whatever they were doing and turned their attention to the front of the house. Akhil saw his mother gasp, eyes wide as a look of panic flashed across her face. He raced to the door,

recognizing the voice immediately. There, standing in front of him was his *Dadhi*, his beloved grandmother, the mother of his father, the woman who had raised him to what he is now.

“Prasad, please don’t leave me like this *beta...*” she whimpered as her eyes began to water. She dropped her luggage in the hallway and cautiously walked into the living area as everyone followed each of her steps with their eyes.

“*Hey Raam,*” his grandmother prayed as she saw his son’s picture with garlands tied onto it instead of him, alive, greeting her. A few minutes had passed by and she was still standing there, unmoved. His mother’s face was ghost-white and sweat was pouring down her forehead as she witnessed her mother-in-law before her eyes, seeing what a mistake she had made in giving her son to her. The room was so silent that one could hear a pin drop. The only noise that could be heard was the soft murmurs from *Dadhi’s* mouth. Then suddenly, out of the blue, she turned around, staring at everyone, before she began talking.

“You have all been so kind to come here for the great tragedy that has occurred to my son, my one and only beloved son. I cannot thank you enough for all the help you have down but I strongly believe that you all have your own lives to worry about. It’s Sunday and your kids need to go to school tomorrow. Leave the rest to me. I’ll take it from here.” his grandmother said, shooing everyone out of the house. As soon as they were gone, she walked towards Rahi and Akhil, who were both leaning against the wall beside their mother.

“Rahi, Akhil, I think you both should go to bed now. It’s getting late and you have school tomorrow. You don’t want to be late now, do you? Come one, chop, chop” commanded *Dadhi*. Really, Akhil and Rahi didn’t go to sleep until 10:00 pm but the tone in their grandmother’s voice had some sort of edge to it, as if it were trying to tell them this was not an option, but rather an order that they had to do. *Strange* Akhil thought, despite everything that has happened *Dadhi* didn’t seem too worried about the death of her son. He remembered his mother once told him ways that people acted when something they didn’t want to happen, happens.

“Most cry about it”, she remembered her saying; “however, others don’t cry which can be dangerous to their health. They get paralyzed and some even become unconscious when they witness a great depression before their eyes. Others try to pretend it never happened and move on in life, which can be dangerous as well as some start to imagine the dead alive and around them”. It was obvious that Akhil’s grandmother had chosen the last tactic; pretending that her son never died and was still roaming the streets of Hamilton.

Jogging up the stairs, Akhil and Rahi took one quick glance at their grandmother before stepping into their own rooms. They both could hardly manage the past couple of days without their father and to think of all the years ahead of them without their *Papa...* Akhil shuddered as he climbed up on his bed.

CHAPTER 2

Waiting for school to end was torture. Everyone Akhil would pass by would give him strange looks or sad faces. Some would stop by and pat his back or murmur the international healing words to his ears. Even in class, the teachers would no longer look into his eyes but would rather talk to the third person who they imagined was beside him and could convey their messages to

him. His father hadn't done anything wrong; he only died because of cancer. Did they think he possessed the same type of cancer as well? *Just great*, he thought, *just great*.

Finally school ended and he retreated to the safety of the library's armchair that was located in the corner of the kids section. Panting, he slowly removed his backpack, carefully so he wouldn't drain any more energy from him. He leaned back into the soft lush leather pillows that were placed behind his back and watched his surroundings as they moved. Kids playing trains, little girls with Barbie dolls, mothers and fathers watching proudly at their children, the smell of new and old books combining together. Really, the library was the one place he could relax. He had always had an interest in reading books and was almost done all the teen books they kept. He came here so often, that the librarians even remembered who he was and would start discussions with him about various subjects and hobbies.

Akhil glanced up at the clock that was dangling dangerously on the wall in front of him. 3:30 it read. He was supposed to leave for home at 4:00 but really, there was nothing for him to do here other than watch other people as they enjoy their own happy lives. He got up and walked to the door, only realizing that he should have brought an umbrella as he stepped into the heavy downpour. *Too late*, he thought. There was no use in turning back now. He was going to complete this mission whether he liked it or not. He remembered all the challenges that he and his dad would do. He smiled thinking about those days, the days when he felt so happy, fearing about nothing, living the life he was given, enjoying every last minute of it till the end.

He pulled up his hoodie but the rain still managed to get to his hair. When he entered the house he was completely drenched and his appearance made the whole house smell like the musty damp air of Hamilton when it's raining.

Strange, he thought as he saw the lights were on. Somebody was already home. His sister was at the after school program at her school and her mom was at work. Was *Dadhi* home already? *No*, he thought. She was at the temple to attend the festival for the beginning of *Navaratri*, a festival dedicated to the worship of the Divine Mother. *Dadhi* had gone to the psychiatrist for a mental checkup before she had gone to the temple and was found to be alright. The doctor had said that *Dadhi* has experienced several deaths in her life, one of the reasons why she had acted so strangely even after the death of her son.

Akhil entered the living room cautiously, wondering if there was somebody lurking around. On the dining table lay a note that read: *As soon as the sun sets, meet us in your backyard*. The curiosity was killing Akhil and he couldn't wait until sunset, which was just a few minutes away. He raced to the backyard door and pulled the handle. It didn't budge. He pulled again, this time resting one foot on the door. Nothing happened. *What in the world is going on here?* He thought. This time he inspected the door more closely, hoping to find a clue to why the door wouldn't seem to give away. His answer was in the form of some sticky white substance which someone had used to shut the door. He raced to the window to see if he could see anything but the view that came to him was the back of a cardboard piece. Frustrated, he sat on the sofa as he watched the minutes tick by on the brand-new clock in the living room that his father had installed just this month.

Finally it was sunset. He ran back to the backyard door and tried to push it open but failed. This time he was more determined. He could feel it. The strength, the power, it was all coming back to him. He was the Akhil that his father had spent his whole life raising and today he was

going to show his father what he could accomplish. Curling his fingers into a fist, he tried to punch the door. Precisely at that time, the door creaked open. Akhil tumbled forward, face first on to the lush soft green grass. The sound of clapping reached his ears first. The smell of fresh baked goods made its way towards his nose next. Pushing himself up, he looked around, letting his eyes adjust to the dim light that was given off by the sun. Standing in front of him was his English teacher, offering him a hand. Accepting it, Akhil brought himself up, dusting the dirt that was sticking to his jeans. He glanced around, wide-eyed. Lights, balloons, streamers, goodies and gifts were everywhere. His whole class was there, including his best friend Aryan.

“Happy Birthday Akhil”, they all hollered together as they proceeded into the ‘Happy Birthday’ song. He blinked hard, fighting back tears of joy. After all that has happened, he had forgotten his birthday, yet these people who he’d only been with for two years remembered the day he was brought to this world.

“How...how did you...” Akhil asked, stammering and blushing profusely.

“It was nothing”, replied Aryan, “We called your mom a few days ago and asked her about the surprise birthday party and she said it would be fine. Today, before she left for work, she let us all into the backyard. Despite everything that has happened, we couldn’t forget your birthday Akhil. You’re an inspiration to all of us and forgetting your birthday is like forgetting ours.”

Akhil was on cloud nine. He had never imagined how many people cared about him. The party was tremendous and everyone had a pleasant time, laughing and joking around. The food was appetizing, and Akhil couldn’t help devouring a whole slice of his teacher’s incredible homemade black forest cake. But it wasn’t the decorations, accessories, and presents that brought him so much joy. It was the love that everyone had given him that brought a smile upon his face. His mother, sister, and grandmother had arrived only shortly after, they too surprised about the party. Although his mother knew about it, she never expected one this big.

Akhil lay back onto the lush green grass, staring up at the night sky. His father had probably already reached heaven and was now waving down to him from above. He smiled, waving back.

“Good night, *Papa*”, he whispered.

Age 12

Short Story, 2nd Place

Live Your Life You're Lucky: Some Aren't Here

By *Katarina Derikx*

This story isn't really mine. It's Tom's. It all started one Saturday morning with Tradition. Tom glanced up at the clock and grinned. I grinned back. Tradition was on. We both ran downstairs, hoping to claim the best water gun possible. I giggled as I (as usual) got downstairs first, and was soon holding the SuperSoaker.

"How unfortunate," I said. "Looks like you were too slow once again."

"No, not really, because guess who found one in the basement?" he grinned.

"No. Way."

Tom smiled and sprayed me.

"Ahhh!" I laughed.

He joined in.

Fifteen minutes later we were sitting in the living room watching Downton Abbey.

As usual Tom said "Can you imagine living in that castle? Obviously I'd be the chauffer, and not the footman."

"Don't bet on that," I say pulling out the chocolate ice cream, cheddar popcorn and the cards.

"Got any sevens?" I asked.

"Go fish. Any fours?"

I handed him the two fours. Downton, ice cream, popcorn and cards. What could be better? I had known Tom since before I could remember. He knows all of my secrets, and I know all of his. He wants to be a movie director, like his dad. His Dad died when he was three, and his Mom's really depressed. That's when he came to live with me. He's my best friend. Basically, every Saturday we have a water fight, then we watch Downton Abbey while eating ice cream, popcorn and playing cards.

"Hey where were you yesterday?"

"Oh... Nowhere."

"Are you sure?"

“Yeah. Why the suspicion?”

“Just wondering. Well, any twos?”

That night my mum came in to kiss me good night.

“Mom, I think something’s wrong with Tom.” I said.

“Oh. He went to the hospital, but nothing’s wrong. The doctor said he just has the flu.” she replied.

A wave of relief washed over me. “Are you sure?”

“The doctor is sure, and that’s good enough for me.” she smiled.

“Ok.”

“Good night.”

“Good night.”

A few hours later (eleven o’clock maybe?) I heard Mum yelling for Dad to come. My heart stopped. What was going on? I crept out of bed to where Mum was yelling. Someone (or maybe it was two people) was yelling. I found myself walking into Toms’ room.

“Mum?” I heard myself ask.

“Kanisha. Get your Dad! Now!” she yelled.

I bolted. “Dad!” I found him halfway down the hall.

“I know I’m coming.” he ran into Toms’ room. “Oh my gosh. But... the doctor said...”

I came in right just as Dad was leaving. Tom had a rash on his right arm, and it looked like he couldn’t move his head.

“Mom, my head hurts.” he said. It sounded like he was crying a bit. “My neck feels stiff.”

“Shh. It’s okay. It’ll be okay.” Mom soothed.

I stood in the doorway, feeling helpless. I realized that there were tears running down my cheeks. I was terrified. I thought he was going to die. My Dad came back upstairs just then.

“The ambulance is on its way.” he said. At least I think he said that. The room was kind of spinning around. I thought I might faint. Somehow, the ambulance showed up and I found myself being driven to the hospital in the back of Dads’ car.

“What’s going on?” I asked.

Dad didn’t answer.

A few minutes later, Mom, Dad and I were all sitting in the waiting room. Everything seemed to have happened so quickly. Dad was holding Mom’s hand.

“It’s okay honey. It’s going to be okay.” he said over and over again.

“Mr. and Mrs. Kent?” the doctor asked.

“Yes?” Mom said getting up.

“This way please.”

We followed him into another room.

“Where’s Tom?” Mom asked.

“Please, let me explain. I’m afraid that Tom had meningitis. We did everything we could, but it was too late.” he said, then paused. “I’m very sorry.”

“Why?” she sobbed. “Why?”

I felt numb. Tom was gone. I felt tears running down my cheeks.

As Mom, Dad and I were leaving, I looked out the window. I saw roses. They were Tom’s favorite flowers. Mom, Dad and I left. We drove home in silence.

As I lay in bed, I dreaded the funeral.

The next day I got dressed in my black dress and put my hair up in a bun. Tom had always the bun. As we drove off I, saw families together, and I envied them. There wasn’t a cloud in the sky that day.

As I went to bed that night, I kept on thinking of how many people were affected by meningitis every day. I wanted to help them somehow. Suddenly, a wonderful idea came to me. I couldn’t wait to try it out.

The next day, I turned on the computer and opened Microsoft Word to write a short story. It took me a week to finish my short story. The story was this exact one. When my story was done, I made 32 batches of 20 cookies, 32 batches of 15 cupcakes and 15 cakes. I was all set.

The next day, I announced to my parents that I was heading to the park. I gathered up my supplies and went off. When I got there, I set everything up everything I made. I remembered to include the cashbox and prices. Lastly, I set up my “HELP FIGHT MENINGITIS” sign. It was this one. I realized then that life would go on without Tom, and, someday, I would see him again. He would be waiting for me with water guns, popcorn, ice cream and cards. We would sit down together and enjoy an episode of Downton Abbey after the water fight. I would laugh and sit down beside him. Even though he would already know what I was about next, it wouldn’t stop me from telling him. I would tell him how much I missed him when he wasn’t here.

Age 13
Poetry, 1st Place

The Deal With Wishes

By Hannah Luong

Is it selfish to wish,
To wish for endless bliss,
The kind of bliss,
You will soon miss.

Especially once it ends,
Like how magic often tends
To disperse
Like a broken curse.

Just to leave behind,
Longings in one's mind.
To go back to those times,
When life was awfully kind.

But alas,
Just like any task,
You must learn what to do.
Only this one was in you.

Sadly yes,
Even at your best.
You'll find your intentions
To be an awkward mess.

Do not be afraid.
Or your wish may fade.
To be lost in the abyss,
Where no one will get its gist.

So hold on to your wants,
Like some delicious croissants.
Don't leave them in the blue,
For they now are part of you.

I'll tell you this in the last verse.
Wishing for things is never a curse.
Everyone deserves to wish,
For some marvelous bliss.

Age 13
Poetry, 2nd Place

Your Night, My Light

By Saieeda Muntaba Begum

Star light, star bright,
First star I see tonight.
As you shine a path with all your glory,
All I can find is my own misery.

We live as humans, dull and quiet,
While you shine as bright as midnight light.
You carry the burden of many secrets and wishes,
Some sweet and kind, some evil and malicious.

On this cool dark night, in an orderly fashion,
You're a ball of fire, full of burning passion.
We may never know your true form or shape,
Yet you're eternally beautiful, so full of grace.

But as you shine so brightly so,
Do you have any wishes you'd like one to know?
You carry much wisdom, in all of your light,
But as demands echo so, does it curtail your might?

You live on so freely, innocence unsold,
Yet seem trapped in space with nothing to behold.
Throughout my own lifetime, you'll always seem still,
Your journey's a long one, so live on as you will.

Star light, star bright, now don't you fear,
As your fire burns out, and the night disappears.
You may not see me, though I'll always seek you,
When the day dies, when night's life begins anew.

Age 13
Short Story, 1st Place

Sapling of Wind Shore

By Sue Lee

On Wind Shore, the four-year old tree sapling stood by itself, alone as usual, lonely and wistful, on the quiet shore. Waves swished against the sand they had smoothed in the same place over and over again for so many years. The sky was a pale gray swirled with clouds. Shore winds blew over sand and water.

The sapling sighed. Although the view was quiet and open, it was too gray, too flat, too cold, too pale, too colorless, too lifeless.

Wind Shore was always so bland with little sunlight, and no golden sand that children liked to play with- only sand that was grayish brown, rough with rocks mixed in. The water was clear but always too still and motionless in spite of the wind. It was grayish, too, because of the thick heavy clouds that always hung over the sea. The clouds were the main reason for the grayness. It blocked most of the blue sky and sunlight out. Due to this reason, Wind Shore did not have any visitors. Life at Wind Shore was peaceful but bland, gray and grim.

Now, starting its fifth year, it was filled with spring hope again, despite the dreary winter.

Now the four-year-old sapling was slender and delicate, and smaller than other trees its age because of the lack of sunlight throughout its life. It had a very slender trunk, and thin delicate branches spread out in a variety of directions. It had leaves placed sparingly among the branches, which always started off a pretty yellow-green in spring, turned a dark green in summer, turned red and feeble yellow in autumn, and of course, fell off in winter.

The sapling had been a tiny little feeble thing when it was dropped at this shore by the wind, and had spent four years by itself. The water only provided water. The sand only provided sand. The sunlight was barely able to squeeze through the thick gray clouds. Because of this strictly limited supply of sunlight, the sapling was not able to grow properly through four years, but it had survived.

But nothing at Wind Shore provided love and friendship.

One autumn evening, the sapling was watching the dark gray clouds darken into a foggy night black, when it heard loud flapping and swishing. It tensed and waited.

And from the top of the cliff came a large seagull. It was broad and fearless, and it whooshed through the air and flew around the shore for a few minutes, then landed right beside the sapling.

The sapling tensed even more, with surprise and nervousness.

The seagull looked up at the sapling with glittery eyes.

“Name’s Tessel.” he said loudly. “Yours?”

The sapling blinked, and needed a few moments to realize that the gull was talking to it, and was asking its name.

“I-I-I don’t have a name.” it stammered, and then was embarrassed by that fact.

Tessel stared at the sapling, and then guffawed. “No name? Well, I’ll give you one then!” he paused. “I’ll call you Chopstick. You look like one, all skinny and stiff.”

The sapling stiffened. *Chopstick?*

Tessel laughed again. “Well, I’ll probably stick around here again. See ya later!”

He whooshed away, leaving the sapling breathless under the cloudy black night.

The sapling replayed the whole interview with Tessel again by himself, and was bewildered, but had a strange happy feeling that this was sort of a beginning of a friendship.

The next day, the sapling felt, in the gray dawn, that something exciting, something different was going to happen. It looked, strained to see anything different in the thick gray clouds stretching ahead, looking into the cold water’s depths, staring down at the sand.

The winds swooshed over to the sapling and swirled around it, rustling its leaves and shaking its branches. The playful group of winds came and went, and the sapling, ruffled and breathless, waited.

The sun rose, bits of gold and pink light peeking through the clouds. Water seemed even clearer than usual, winds seemed happy, even the thick clouds seemed a little more friendlier today.

It yanked water up its roots and drank thirstily. The sapling was full of happy energy and hope. Tessel was coming back! They might be friends! Something different and fun might happen today!

The sun was still not quite fully up. Not quite morning yet. About seven o’clock? The sapling waited impatiently. It had waited patiently for a friend for years, but now that it had one, all its original patience seemed to be blown away.

After that long day, at about the similar time of the previous day, Tessel came back, flapping his wings loudly. “I’m back!” he shouted loudly. “How you feeling, Chopstick? I was hangin’ out with my friends! Whew! A crazy lot.”

“I wish I had friends.” said the sapling sadly. “You’re the only one who I’ve ever talked to in my life, Tessel. Except for myself.”

The large seagull blinked, and then offered a grin. “Tell you what- we’ll be friends. I’ll come here every day. At this time. We’ll talk. You like that?”

“Oh, yes!” the sapling whispered.

Tessel nodded, flashed another grin, and flew off.

And so, day after day Tessel came, and he and the sapling talked about all sorts of things, and jested and laughed a great deal. Tessel never stayed long, so the few minutes of loud, hilarious conversation were very precious to the lonely sapling.

Tessel had a queer way of talking- he talked about huge, exciting, unbelievable things, such as flying through the clouds, and plunging into the water, and rising into the air with the wind, so simply and boldly like it was no big deal to him, while every sentence was like a new world to the sapling.

And of course, the thing that meant most to the sapling he had said was his offer of friendship. So quick and simple. That was Tessel’s way. His friendship always made the sapling laugh breathlessly. “CHOPSTICK!” he would always bellow. “I AM BACK, CHOPSTICK!”

So it went- every night, their friendship grew, and the sapling was happier than it had ever been in its short life.

One pale dawn, the sapling was trying to feel bits of sunlight poking through the clouds, when it heard a soft rustle. It started, and listened carefully. And then.....From the top of the large cliff, a child appeared. Then the child fearlessly swung her legs over the cliff, and hand under hand started to climb down. She was unbelievably nimble and quick for a little girl, only about nine. In a flash she had come down the tall cliff and was standing on the sand of Wind Shore.

She looked around with her clear gray eyes like the water of Wind Shore. Her light wispy hair looked like wind. It was a chilly day, so she was wearing a bright red coat, which stood out brilliantly from grayness. She looked around- probably looking for something besides the enormous, vast, distant, gray sky and water.

Then her eyes spotted the sapling. Her face lighted up with a rosy bright smile, and she rushed to the sapling. She looked at it adoringly, although there wasn’t much difference in their heights.

The sapling looked down, too, and saw her face clearly. Her round cheeks were a brilliant red thanks to the cold, and her clear eyes were shining. Her hair was blown back by the wind. She was quite small, but rosy and pretty, and a shy, timid air hung around her, but her eyes were more eager than anything the sapling had ever seen.

She reached out and touched the sapling’s trunk with her hand, and the sapling tensed with joy and wonder at the touch. The girl looked at the sapling smiling.

“My name is Adele, little tree.” she said in a voice round and rosy as herself. “Do you have a name?”

The sapling shook its branches.

“No?” said Adele gently. “All right, can I give you one?”

The sapling remained still, but rustled its leaves.

“I’ll call you Retty.” she said. “It was my doll’s name long ago. She was so skinny but pretty like you, little tree! I lost her, but *you’re* as satisfying as any doll.

“I live up there.” Adele continued, pointing up at the cliff. “We moved here yesterday. We have our own wonderful cottage. I love it here! Much, much better than the city. Mama and Papa says we’ll only be staying for a little, but I wish we could stay here forever. We’ll be best friends, Retty. I’ll come every day and we’ll talk. It’s so beautiful down here! But I must go now, Retty. Mama and

Papa won’t like me coming down the cliff. I’ll come here tomorrow at morning.

Take care, Retty!”

With a hug and a smile and a wave, Adele ran across the sand and clambered up the cliff. The sapling breathed. Sweet little Adele! It had another friend! It was sure that Adele’s rosy bright friendship would be very different from Tessel’s, but just as wonderful.

So, with two good friends, the sapling’s days flew by, completely unlike its life a month ago. In the morning, Adele’s brief visits lightened up the whole day, and in the afternoon the sapling enjoyed the largeness and the quietness of Wind Shore. In the evening it watched the sun set, and daydreamed happily. Tessel’s very brief night visits allowed the sapling to end the day with a jolly, loud laugh.

The sapling could talk with Tessel, but not with Adele. It expressed some of its thoughts with its leaves and branches, but not really talk. *Because*, the sapling always thought. *Adele is a human...*

One day, Adele was chattering, when the sapling heard a familiar loud flapping. *Tessel!* The sapling thought urgently.

Tessel barrelled through the air and plopped down beside the sapling, and beside Adele. Adele shrieked.

“Tessel!” said the sapling urgently. “What are you doing here?”

Tessel laughed loudly. “I wanted to see you now, so I came! Anything wrong?”

Apparently, Adele couldn’t understand their talk, but she knew that they were communicating. She looked at Tessel carefully. “Is he your friend, too, Retty?”

Tessel blinked, and then grinned. “*Retty?*”

So, little by little, the sapling and Tessel talking, Adele and the sapling communicating, and Adele laughing at Tessel’s squawks, the three friends’ bonds formed and strengthened. So Tessel often came in the morning, to play with Adele as well as the sapling. How happy the sapling was, with its wonderful two friends! It didn’t want anything else in the world.

The happy days filled with friendship went- a month flew by. Autumn made the sapling's leaves red and yellow, and then it grew windier and chillier.

And one day, the happy days were changed by Tessel and Adele coming together one day, both without their usual cheerfulness.

"Chopstick?" Tessel said nervously. "I have to tell you something."

The sapling leaned forward just as nervously as Tessel.

"I'm- I'm- I'm migrating." he said boldly. "I'm flying south. For the winter. I have to leave soon. I'm sorry."

The sapling gasped, and it seemed than its happiness during the past month had been torn away and had fallen into a black pit. And then Adele stepped forward.

"Oh, Retty!" she whispered. "Mama and Papa told me today that we're leaving tomorrow! They said we were just here for a visit anyway... oh, I have to leave you, Retty!"

The sapling's heart was stomped on with something sharp and heavy. It wished it could talk or cry to express its sadness, like Adele or Tessel could. But it could only move its branches blankly. The sapling was heartbroken- both of its best friends were leaving... *Can I ever see Tessel or Adele again?* It thought, quivering. *Will I ever have friends again?*

Adele hugged the sapling, and Tessel perched on one of the sapling's branches, and for a few moments the three friends huddled together with shared feelings.

And, at that moment, an amazing change came over the sapling. Adele's arms around its trunk, and Tessel's feet curled around its branch, made it feel so cozy and warm and happy. Then the sapling realized something- they were firm friends who would be friends always. The sapling and Adele and Tessel would always stay that way.

With that knowledge, the sapling's heartbreak mended into something inside it, something solid and warm and sweet, that the sapling knew was the friendship of Tessel and Adele.

Then Adele said something else. The sapling listened.

"But Retty, that's not all! Guess what- we bought that cottage on the cliff! So every vacation, we'll come back here!" her cheeks pink again, she grasped the sapling's trunk affectionately. "I'll come back, Retty."

"So will I, Chopstick." said Tessel loudly. "Migrating means we only go for the winter, come back spring, and stay 'til the next winter! Did ya know that, Chopstick?"

Relief flooded the sapling- it felt a warm, soft feeling in addition to what it felt a few minutes ago. Tessel was coming back. Adele was coming back. They would stay friends.

Then it realized that Tessel was carrying a shovel in its feet, and Adele carrying a huge bag.

Adele knelt down beside the sapling, and took something out of the bag. It was another sapling.

That little thing was much smaller than the sapling of wind shore. It was very slender and delicate, with pretty little leaves and branches. The little tree was still as Adele lifted it out of the bag.

“Here’s a friend for you for the winter, Chopstick!” said Tessel proudly, tossing down the shovel beside Adele.

Adele carefully dug in the sand with the shovel and planted the little sapling, beside the sapling of Wind Shore. “How do you like it, Retty?” she asked happily. “We got a friend for you!”

The sapling would have been too touched and surprised to speak even if it could have. It rustled its leaves with all its might.

Adele hugged the sapling once more. “I’ll miss you, Retty.” she whispered. “Goodbye!”

Tessel ruffled the sapling’s leaves. “Take care, Chopstick! I’ll be back!”

The sapling watched as its two best friends went away from Wind Shore, with a sweet, wistful feeling in its heart. Then it turned to the little tree.

The little tree blinked and stretched. It looked up at the sapling and smiled. To the sapling of Wind Shore, that smile seemed like the most beautiful thing in the whole world.

“My name is Kirsten.” said the little sapling. “What’s yours?”

Age 13

Short Story, 2nd Place

An Acadian Tale

By *Julie Shadd*

Section 1- Emmalyn

If I could just reach a little higher, I'd be able to pull myself up. As it was, Nadie found me before I could find a way to get up the tree.

"I found you!" she shouted in Lnuismk, which was her native language. Mine was French, but I had grown up visiting her tribe often, and spoke Lnuismk fluently enough to have her as my best friend.

"No fair!" I called back. "You didn't give me enough time!"

"Sure I did! You just didn't hide fast enough! Now come on down, it's almost dark. Your family will miss you, Emmalyn!" I rolled my eyes. Of course. Typical Nadie. She knew when the sun was setting and when the sun set, I had to be home with my parents, or there were consequences. Her name literally means wise.

"Kay," I answered, and hopped off the branch. "You know, I- what was that?" A bang had sounded in the distance. Nadie turned white.

"I know what that is," she breathed, looking frightened. "That was a gun. You wouldn't hear them because you are at home, but when your people hunt, they use something quite the same. They have never hunted at this time of day, this time of year. That means they're not hunting animals."

Section 2- Thomas

"Land ho!" Someone shouted. Finally! I thought. The other soldiers and I have been on this boat for months! We were shipped out of Britain to help support their forces, but I don't know why. We were about to find out.

"Alright, men!" our commander shouted, gaining our attention. "After months of our journey, we are about to reach North America. Our first assignment will be to move the Acadians. They are of French descent, and we fear an uprising. Our plan is to crush said uprising before it begins. Many will struggle, but your job is to use *any means necessary* to get them on those boats.

Hmmm. Moving them from their homes? Just because they're French? I mean, we just won a war, but no need to rub it in their faces. Well, *I* didn't help win the war, and am technically much too young to be a soldier, but I need the money, and I'm tall, so I get by.

Before joining the British forces, I had read up on their recent history. When they won over the land in 1713, the British were happy to leave the Acadians to themselves. They traded peaceably had no quarrel. At some point, though, the British needed the Acadians full support. They wanted to make the Acadians British.

Now, in 1755, they are trying to make all the Acadian citizens sign a paper saying that they will always be loyal to the British, and that includes taking up arms against British enemies. From what I've heard, the Acadians are split on how to take this. Some are OK with the idea. Others outright refuse. As it is, we'll put them all in the same group and are now moving them off our land, to take it back, and not worry about an "uprising" as our commanding officer would say.

Section 3- Emmalyn

I don't even glance at Nadie before sprinting towards my village. We are deep in the forest, and all I can hear is my breathing. My feet are pounding on the ground, oblivious to the branches and roots cutting into my bare feet. The only thing I can think about is my home.

My papa said that the British were unhappy with us, and warned me this might happen. That doesn't change anything now. By the time I reach the outskirts of our farm, I can hardly breathe, and I pause to see what's happening. Faithful Nadie is close behind me, and once I've recovered slightly, I see hundreds of soldiers rounding up the people. I gasp with the breath I have left. "Why... are... they... doing this?" I turn to Nadie.

"I wish I knew, Emmalyn. But I don't. The way they're going, it would be best for us to stay here."

"I can't," I shook my head at her, willing her to understand how I felt I needed to fight. "I can't, I can't, I can't."

She looked at me with determination in her eyes. "Then let's go."

Section 4- Thomas

"Oh my."

Those are the only words I have when we reach the land. It's not what I expected. The way everyone made it sound, it was hardly different than Europe, but it's really not. Everyone still lives in log cabins, and they need help just to erect a wall. This would be easier than I thought.

A few minutes later, our groups were sent out to the villages to begin work. At first, it was kind of fun, but then when I saw what we were taking from these people, I soured on the idea.

I was planning to run to the forest and leave. That's when I saw an Acadian girl standing on the edge of farm. She turned, and I saw her talking to a savage girl. I was shocked for a moment, but then they both came charging across the field.

I looked around me instinctively, and started backing away. They didn't hesitate. I couldn't fire at them. I dropped my musket. Bad idea. The savage girl grabbed my arm and twisted it behind my back, then yanked and knocked me over. As I tried to sit up, the Acadian girl shoved me down.

“*Porquois est vous ici?*” She demanded, and while I had no idea what she meant, I could tell she wasn't happy.

“Uhh...”

“*Est ce que tu parle français?*”

“Umm... no?”

“Oh... English, yes? I know that.”

“You speak English? Where did you learn?”

She looked hesitant for a moment, then stiffened and replied, “My father was... how do you say, like trader,”

“Merchant?”

“Yes, that. He teach me. Says it is important to understand many people. I never learn more, you take him away.” She gestured to the boats in the distance. “My papa, he and mama on one of boat. I may never see again, thanks to you.” she gave me a hard look.

“Look, I never did that, I was deserting, planning to run to the forest, when your... slave? tackled me.”

She looked outraged. “Slave? No, no, no! Not slave, friend. Not savage, wise.”

She turned and had a short conversation with her friend in another language. How many people are trilingual? No one I knew. She turned back to me.

“We will make you deal.”

Section 5- Emmalyn

I tried so hard to control myself. My home was being destroyed and a soldier comes after me, having finished with my parents. Nadie calmed me down and suggested that we make him a deal. I agreed.

“We will make you deal,” I had said in my best English. “You teach me enough English to pass as British colonist. I help cover your tracks as... you called... deserter.” I thought it seemed a good deal. Apparently he did too. The soldier stuck out his hand, and I shook it. “Deal.” He said. “By the way, I'm Thomas.”

“Emmalyn.”

Once we had reached Nadie's home, Thomas was given a cot and a place to rest. Nadie and I did our best to make sure that anyone who saw our trail would figure that Thomas had died. He would show up along with a boat of more colonists, under a new name, and no one would know what had happened.

After a few weeks in Nadie's village, my English was fluent, and the word was a boat was coming soon, so Thomas and I could show up in the village and resume life. Our plan was to live in the same house, as he looked old enough to be married. He would be a farmer, and I would keep house and work part time on the farm.

Of course, nothing could fix the loss of my home. My parents. My lifestyle. I knew I could never get those back. Part of me wondered why I even bothered to stay; Nadie was my only reason. I gave myself a shake, since I could not bear to leave her without knowing if I could even find what I was looking for. I sighed and got back to work with these thoughts filling my head.

Thus I spent the rest of the week gathering preparations to act as new settlers in Newfoundland. Thomas was to change his name to Phillip, and I was his betrothed, and we were hoping to gain land and a peaceful life here in the new land.

On the last day, Nadie wished me farewell and I shouldered my bag, grabbed Thomas' (aka Phillip's) hand, and we headed toward our future in the colony. "It's my turn to seek you out," I told Nadie as we parted. "I will find you again."

**** Maitland Banting Silver Quill Award – Honourable Mention**

Age 14
Poetry, 1st Place

Recording

By Maeve Jenkinson

We are above....

Yet I have never felt more

Below.

up,

up,

You are far away now, far up,
but I can feel you beneath
the sheets we once lay in and
between the blouses you wore.

I surface,
take a breath
In,
A sweet smile,
faded laughter
Out.

A hand pushing my head closer.
A warm chest, warmer heart beat. (Rewind, Rewind ◀◀)
My love for you is lost,
replaced with a grief I

buried
inside.

It weighs me down Deeper,

D

E

E

P

E

R,

aching in my chest.

A dulled pain I refuse to feel.

People speak to me,
but they are blurred.

The world is spinning, running past
while I watch on Fast Forward ►►.

Reality is on a remote (the remote?) island
and I am the survivor.

Sub
merged

into solitude,
but unable to breathe
lest the ocean I live under drown me.

FREEZE FRAME (Pause II)

I am stuck,

A sliver of time

dreaming of days when you were here, finger poised upon the button
yet afraid to press Play ►.

So, for now,

I take my time,
pretend I am talking
to a real person,
rather than a memory on repeat.

(skip, skip, skip)

Click.

The tape has ended,
I cannot bear to be alone.
When I dream of your spirit,
I can see through your smile. (Please Stop■)



**** HAALSA Young Poet's Award Co-Winner**

Age 14
Poetry, 2nd Place

mind of mine

By Rochelle Rosales

throbbing head chest rising sharply breathing is ragged through dry lips my hands are frigid and my back
is stiff shoulders hunched legs buckling and bending at the knees breaking from the weight of this burden
the weight of this burden the weight of this
is too much to handle and my heart is beating it is beating it is
a pulse and a pattern of unsteadiness so unpredictable at the same time expected such an unsurprising
surprise choosing just the right moment picking just the right time at my worst and my lowest at my worst
at my worst at my

Age 14

Short Story, 1st Place

The Sound of Bells

By *Kate Lewis*

I walked over to where he lay, wondering if this one would go to Heaven or Hell. It was impossible to tell just by someone's appearance. I've seen many little girls with pigtails go downstairs, so I've stopped guessing.

His death seemed pretty normal. A blood clot, I think. He looked young, about 14. Tragic. I bent over him and coaxed his soul out of his body. When he realized what was going on, I started talking. "Hello, I am Death. What's your name?" I try to be pleasant. I understand death can be a traumatic experience. That's why I stopped with all the black and the scythe and the skulls. Apparently it freaked a lot of people out.

"Um... My name's Asa."

"Well, I hate to be the one to tell you this, but you're dead. You died in your sleep." I started walking down the long path to the doors and he followed. I was waiting for the usual onslaught of questions: "Where are we going?", "Can I come back to life?", "What happens next?". Instead I hear him ask a question no one has asked before: "Can you tell me a story?" I stopped walking and looked at him.

"I figured that whatever happens next will happen, but I've always loved stories and if this is my last chance to hear one..."

"Umm..." I've never got this request before and wasn't sure what to do. Most deaths were boring, normal, and predictable. An infection or an illness. However, once in a blue moon, I would witness something worthy of sharing. Though it's not like anyone asked until now. All of a sudden, an image popped into my head of a boy with a wide smile painted on his pale skin. I smiled and turned to Asa.

"Let me tell you the story of Ezra Banks..."

Since the day he was born, Ezra was confronted with many deaths.

Oxfordshire, England. 1837.

I approached Julia Banks and looked at her lying in bed, face ashen. She had a hemorrhage and would die any minute now. Her newborn son was in the arms of the midwife. Julia was struggling for a breath, a last sentence. I took pity on her and let her have it.

“My son... His- His name will be Ezra...” I gathered her soul into my arms. She looked at me with eyes like saucers.

“What’s happening, where am I-”

“Hello, I’m sorry to be the one to tell you this but you’ve died. I’m Death, what’s your name?”

“Julia, Julia Banks. What will happen to my son... and my daughter... and my husband? I must go back!”

“I’m sorry, but you may not return to the world of the living. Instead, you will have the choice between two doors. One will lead you to Heaven or Hell, whichever one you are destined for, and the other will let you be reborn. If you choose Heaven or Hell, you may not turn back once you see where you are going. If you choose to be reborn you will not fully remember this life, yet you will still have the same traits and may recall certain events. You may think about your decision while we walk.”

I started walking and she quickly followed.

“Can we talk?” She asked.

“Of course. What do you want to talk about?”

“My family... Will they be alright?”

“They’ll miss you, but they will get through it.”

“What about my son. He will never know me and I will never know him. I only hope his father and sister will raise him to be the man I wish him to be. Strong, kind, compassionate, intelligent, and brave.”

We continued walking and little did I know that Ezra Banks would be all the things she wished of him and more.

Oxfordshire, 1845.

I heaved Harold Banks’ soul out of his body. He was a big man with a strong will to stay alive, making it difficult for me to drag him into the afterlife. It was made even harder by the fact that his son, little 8 year old Ezra, was clinging to him, crying. After plenty of heaving, his soul broke free of his body.

“Hello. I’m sorry to be the one to tell you this, but you have died. I am Death, what’s your name?”

“What happened! I need to see my son... I was helping him...”

“You had a brain aneurysm. You held on to life longer than most.”

“What will happen to my children? They’ll have to move to London to live with my brother and his wife. My daughter is 14 and my son is only 8.”

“Like I said to your wife: ‘They’ll miss you but they’ll get through it.’”

“You've met my wife?”

“Yes, and if you are worthy, you may follow her to Heaven. If not, you'll go to Hell. However, should you rather not take the risk, you may be rebo-”

“I'll take the risk. I want the chance to see my wife again.”

We continued down the path until we reached the doors. Harold was reunited with Julia, and they would soon be greeted by more familiar faces.

London, England. 1847.

I came a little early for this death. It wasn't my fault. Jack Banks had been on the edge of death for months. He had pneumonia and his time would soon be up. Jack and his wife, Marietta, had just gotten home, greeting their niece and nephew with smiles and hugs. Violet had finished work a mere hour before and, tired as she was, went to help her aunt prepare dinner. Ezra, on the other hand, had been cooped up in the house all day and was bouncing with energy.

“Uncle! Can you play soldier with me?!” He picked up toy guns and held one out.

“Of course.”

“Jack. You know you haven't been feeling well. Do you really think you should-” Marietta was cut off by her husband.

“Don't worry. I feel fine today. I think I might finally be getting better. Come on, Ezra.” I watched them run around, pretending to shoot each other. I knew he was getting closer when the coughing started. It began small and became bigger. Right before he passed out, he was doubled over, hacking. Ezra screamed and the girls came running. I lifted his soul out of his unconscious body. He was light as a feather and sighed when he drifted into the afterlife.

“Thank God it's over.”

“I'm guessing you know you're dead, so I'll introduce myself. I'm Death, what's your name?”

“I'm Jack. So, what happens next?”

“Well, you will have the choice between two doors...” I continued my normal spiel, while walking. Once finished, I looked over at him, waiting for a response.

“Where'd my brother go?”

“He was admitted to Heaven. Do you want to join him?”

London, 1851.

I'll admit, it was no accident I came early to this death. I felt compelled to see how the Banks' children were doing. Their last parental figure was going to die and, surprisingly, I felt sympathetic. Since the beginning life itself I have had to steal mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, family, and friends. I never once felt sorry. It just had to be done. But for some reason, it felt like I was stealing away Violet and Ezra's last chance at happiness. I watched Marietta struggle to get Ezra to bed.

"I'm hungry. Can I get a slice of bread and some water?"

"No, go to sleep. We have to go to church tomorrow and I don't want to have to deal with trying to wake you up." Ezra sighed and the bed dipped with his weight. She leaned on the doorframe and smiled at him.

"Goodnight, Auntie. I love you."

"Love you too." Marietta turned and walked to her room.

The clock chimed midnight when I collected her soul. I was surprised by how difficult it was. People who died in their sleep usually passed on without a fuss. Marietta was hanging on for her life. When she finally passed, she came yelling.

"I need to get back right now! My niece and nephew have no one else to take care of them! They need someone!"

"I can't send you back. It's not possible."

"I don't care! Who will take care of Violet! And Ezra, he's only 14!"

"They're old enough to take care of themselves. I know they will take care of each other. They have been every time someone they loved died."

"Please..."

"I want to. This is new for me, but I feel bad for them. The children who have experienced so much loss. I'd bring you and the rest of their family back if I could, but it's not possible. I don't control when you die, I just carry you to the afterlife and help you decide what you want to do next."

"Please... There must be a way..."

"Trust me, I've tried. If the dead enter the world of the living, they'll stop existing. Their consciousness will be gone. Trust me, that is worse than what I can give you."

"Will I get to see my husband again?"

"Maybe. He's in Heaven. You may see him again if you are deemed worthy to go to there. However, if you choose that door and you're not good enough to get into Heaven, you have to go to Hell. Your other option is to be reborn."

"I don't believe in rebirth." She stated firmly.

“Okay.”

We got to the doors and she smiled. It was no surprise where she ended up.

London, 1853.

Violet was yelling at Ezra. Apparently he got caught again for stealing. The charmer he was, he got away with it, claiming he was just looking at the huge basket of food.

“I don't care if you got away this time. Next time you will get thrown in jail. I mean, you've stolen enough.”

“Stop, Violet. I'm just trying help. It's not my fault you got fired from your job and can't support us.”

“And it's not my fault, the tailors couldn't afford to pay 3 seamstresses. Maybe if you had a job, we wouldn't be in this situation.”

“Stop blaming this on me!” *Bang.* I didn't see who shot Violet and apparently no one else did either. They only heard fighting and then someone was dead. I don't know who would want to hurt Violet, but everyone has secrets. I tried to pull her out of her body but she was holding on life harder than anyone. Ezra was trying to hug her and the police that showed up were attempting to pull him off. I saw her reach for his hand, and I finally pulled her free. When she realized what was going on she looked at me. No yelling or questions. Crying or pleas to go back. No acceptance or disbelief. Just empty eyes trained on me. Then she looked away.

“I'm sor-” She cut me off with a wave of her hand. I really was sorry. I knew this was coming and tried to prepare myself for it. Nothing could have prepared me for this.

“He'll be hanged.” I knew it was true. “He will die with people thinking he killed me. Our last conversation was full of hate and anger, when we really both love each other.” She looked at me. “Take me to my family.”

And to her family she went.

Newgate Prison, London. Sunday, May 15th, 1853.

I'm not just here to check on Ezra. I'm here for a different prisoner. He has been dying for months. It's important for me to be here... Who am I kidding, I'm only here to check in on Ezra. But I wish I didn't. The happy, young boy I had always watched out for was gone. In his place was a shell of a man, dirty and underfed. He was sitting on a pew of the prison church. I walked closer and heard him muttering. Oh God, he was going mad. Then, as I got closer, I realized he was praying.

“Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name.” He continued praying and I sat next to him. I should be collecting a soul, but I needed to see him a little longer.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen” He finished, crossing himself. Soon, midnight hit and with it came the sound of bells and voices:

“All you that in the condemned hold do lie,
Prepare you, for tomorrow you shall die;
Watch all and pray, the hour is drawing near
That you before the Almighty must appear;
Examine well yourselves, in time repent,
That you may not to eternal flames be sent:
And when St. Sepulchre's bell tomorrow tolls,
The Lord above have mercy on your souls.”

Newgate Prison, London. Monday, May 16th, 1853.

Bodies slowly filled the streets, chatting about what was to happen in a mere hour. I heard a woman speaking animatedly about Ezra. News had traveled quickly about the thief who shot his sister.

“I heard that she was keeping their inheritance and wouldn't share any with him, so he decided to take matters into his own hands.” Her wild gestures cast shifting shadows along the ground. She continued sharing her bizarre stories with anyone who would listen.

The bell of St. Sepulchre struck eight and the doors opened. Ezra was dragged out, looking little better than yesterday. He stepped under the noose. Now was time for him to say his final words.

“I love my sister. I would never hurt her. I should hope I get to see her soon.” The white hood was slipped over his head, and the noose followed. Beneath him, the floor dropped and his neck snapped. I quickly ended his suffering.

“Hello, I'm Death. I've heard a lot about you. Now, you have to make a choice: You can go to Paradise if you are worthy or you can choose rebirth.”

“What if I'm not worthy? Then I will go to Hell?”

“Yes, and you have to make this decision without the knowledge of where you'll end up.”

“And if I am reborn...?”

“You will get a new life, but this one will become a blur. You will be a clean slate. That is until you die again. Then your memories will return.”

“I have to think.” The silence was comfortable and let me think as well. We soon reached the doors and Ezra spoke up.

“I’ve made my choice.”

“How was that for a final story.” I said, turning to Asa.

“Good, but what did he choose?”

“Rebirth. He wanted to try again, for a better life. Why do you ask?”

“Well, it’s just, if he was reincarnated, then I, well I just…”

“Spit it out.”

“I want to see my family. My mom, and my dad. My aunt and my uncle. And my sister, Violet.”

Age 14

Short Story, 2nd Place

Triggered

By *Leena Aung*

I made my rapist breakfast.

We had been living together for two years, and I made him breakfast every morning ever since I moved in. I would make him a healthy breakfast, wake him up and say “I love you” before he left for work. That was our morning routine, and I always believed he loved me.

He had never forced himself upon me and I never expected him to. He came home from work, we had dinner and called it a night. I told him I wasn’t in the mood, and I thought he would respect that. He usually did.

The next morning, I was wide awake before the sun had risen. I sat in the shower for an hour feeling completely disgusted. At him, yes, but more so at myself. I felt that I should have enjoyed it because he was my lover. I thought I should have wanted it.

I got out of the shower, got dressed, walked into the kitchen and made breakfast. Just like always. As I cooked, I started to hate myself more and more. I blamed it on myself. I couldn’t stop myself from trembling, and I knew I didn’t want him to wake up. Repulsive images played through my head over and over again until it felt like they were imprinted in my mind.

I began to cry as I set the food down on the table. Horrible, relentless sobs that left me feeling empty and aching. As soon as I finished breakfast, I packed a bag and fled to my mother’s house, all while he was still asleep. I broke down in tears in her arms. I never told her what happened, and she never asked.

To this day, I still struggle to make or eat breakfast. There are certain things I am unable to eat because I made them for him. Each and every time I am reminded of that morning. It took me a long time before I could stop shaking from just hearing the word “breakfast”.

I made my rapist breakfast, and it ruined my life. Months passed before I stopped blaming myself, and for me to make breakfast without having a panic attack. Be careful when you make fun of what triggers people. You don’t know their stories.

Age 15
Poetry, 1st Place

Nobody Knows Me

By Nicola Lanford

Nobody knows me.
Not my roommate from camp
Who wears Hunter boots
Who speaks like sweet plastic
Who heats up disputes
And acts like she owns me
Girl, nobody knows me.

Not the boys from my sports club
Who lift weights and wear jeans
Who call their friends faggots
Who show off phone screens
Cause that's "where the hoes be"
Dude, nobody knows me.

Not my female role models
Who teach English and art
Who preach self-expression
Who take my thoughts to heart
They sit down, make me cozy
Thanks, nobody knows me.

Not my parents at home
Who read in smooth voices
Who like me with long hair
Who talk about choices
And new movies to go see
Whatever, nobody knows me.

Not my friends from school
Who coach me in fashion
Who analyze feelings
Who listen with passion
And say that this life chose me
Yet nobody knows me.

Not even yours truly
Who is not quite so true
Who yearns to be different
Who feels above you
As my soul overthrows me
Nobody knows me.

Age 15
Poetry, 2nd Place

White Noise

By Kyla Dowling

you are the white noise i play as i fall into a static slumber,
a waterfall voice cascading
you speak in the rhythm of the rain on windows
your throat is a birdcage and your words hum
life fades and your cadence remains

Age 15
Short Story, 1st Place

A Detailed Account of a Girl Who Loved a Boy, Among Other Things

By Nicola Lawford

It was snowing, and she was very much in love with him. She was so in love that she didn't make a single sarcastic remark to her friends as they walked home from school. She wasn't even listening to their conversation, which was really just as bad, but her friends saw it as an improvement.

She was watching the snow fall onto the Toronto streets, busy with the Friday rush hour, and thinking about him. She was far too embarrassed to actually speak to him, but she could think about him all she pleased. Sometimes she wondered what he thought about her. She thought she was pretty, but not like girls in magazines and picture shows. She often tried to pin her hair into nice curls, but it was unfailingly a frizzy blonde mess by midday; she had her sister iron her collar, but it always got turned up every which way it wasn't supposed to be; and, most appallingly, her once-white socks were invariably an interesting shade of creamy brown, which she would not admit was from the hours she spent exploring in the forest.

She was a mere twelve years old, but she desperately wished that she could be sixteen, like her sister Samantha, who *was* pretty like girls in magazines and picture shows. She also wished that she could have been given any name other than Charlie, which she found to be unfortunately unladylike, as names go, and that she might have a nicer nose that did not stick out of her face like a pin.

No, Charlie was not a conventional sort of pretty, but she thought that she might be her own kind of pretty. She felt pretty in the green of her eyes, in the way she sat up straight with her legs crossed (a technique she had learned from observing Samantha), and in the way that the snow fell on her favourite orange hat, which her father had given to her before going overseas to fight the Nazis.

She hoped that she was pretty enough for this boy to overlook her unfortunate name and nose.

No, I mustn't call them unfortunate, she thought. Her attitude had been softened since she had fallen for him.

He's too nice to think that, and after all, he has a funny nose, too.

But she really liked his nose. She thought it had an interestingly geometric structure, with a hump in the middle and a blunt end.

He was a petite, peculiar sort of boy, who had a confident posture but a quiet voice. He made an effort to speak clearly and pronounce his syllables properly, and he said his *d*'s and *t*'s especially nicely, quiet enough so that they were not harsh but loud enough that their clean execution could be heard. His teachers loved him for his excellent diction, and incidentally, most of the seventh grade class felt rather the opposite.

But Charlie, an aspiring star pupil, idolized his admirable speech patterns and his academic success. He was the top math student in the class, and she hoped that she could be just as good as he was someday. He played piano, too, as she had learned from his performance at the school talent show the previous month. She played piano as well, but she didn't think she played as beautifully as he did. He had played a Canon in D, which she had later learned, but she could never play the trills quite right.

She loved how he wore collared shirts under sweaters this time of year, and how he wore those nice socks with diamond patterns on them. She loved his cleft chin, and she loved the pronounced depression between the bottom of his interesting nose and the top of his ornate upper lip (her art teacher had taught her that this depression was called a *philtrum* during the portraiture unit). She loved the way he smiled, and the way he furrowed his brow and made his mouth into an *o* as he gathered words into his head just before speaking. And she desperately loved his name. She loved its full, delicious vowel sounds and elegant silent *e*'s. She said it aloud when she thought she was alone, savouring every syllable: *Eugene Lawrence*. It was a beautiful name, she thought.

Charlie had asked Joanne if she liked his name, too, but she had said it was not very nice.

"I would never marry a man called Eugene!" she had exclaimed, "It's such a silly name. It sounds like a squeal!"

She had scrunched up her face and whined, *en-jeeeee-ccen*, and Charlie had frowned before they both burst out laughing. Joanne was rather particular, but so was Charlie. Joanne was Charlie's favourite friend, although she no longer admitted to having one because she did not want to betray all of her non-favourite friends. Charlie had tried to explain to Joanne how she wanted to look like Samantha and girls in picture shows, but as far as Joanne was concerned she already did. Joanne was Japanese, and she never looked remotely like anyone in picture shows, except for enemy soldiers in news reels about what was happening in the War. But Joanne was pretty, so Charlie figured that she could be pretty enough for Eugene even though she did not look like Samantha or girls in picture shows.

She thought of him nearly all the time. She would sit at home, practicing her piano or studying her math or listening to the radio, and wonder what Eugene Lawrence might be doing right now. Was he listening to the radio, too, hearing the very same words she was? When she was bored doing dishes or folding clothes or making dull conversation with her mother, instead of groaning about the torturous boredom plaguing her life, she wondered what he might do if he were her. Surely *he* would not complain about being bored. Would he ask his mother how her day was? She tried to be kind and considerate, like she imagined he was. She would lay in bed at night and wonder what he might be thinking about. Would he be thinking about school, or hockey, or the War? Did he ever—just maybe, for one split second—think about her?

In reality, Eugene was usually asleep at this hour, and Charlie would have been asleep too if it weren't for the shouting match taking place downstairs.

It was always *You-have-to-let-me-go-to-this-party* and *Samantha-I'm-late-for-work* and *Charlie-doesn't-need-a-babysitter* and *it'll-be-different-when-your-father-comes-home* and sobs because no one had heard news in weeks of whether he was ever coming home at all.

Charlie tried her best to push that out of her mind. She avoided even opening the downstairs closet for fear of smelling her father's dress coat, which would make her cry.

She didn't want to think about the shouting matches, either, so she would cover her ears and curl up into a ball. She would bury her face in her linen nightgown, which she loved because it was the colour of sunshine on crisp snow and Eugene's charmingly crooked teeth, and wonder what Eugene might be thinking about.

She was wondering just this on the walk home from school when she was interrupted by Joanne, who was now her only company; the rest of the girls had all gone off to their houses.

"Charlie? ... Charlie! What do you want to be when you grow up?"

"Huh? Oh."

She made a face.

"I dunno," she answered, and then raised an eyebrow, staring pensively at the sidewalk, "But I don't want to work in a factory like my mum. I wish I could be one of those girls in magazines and pictures shows."

"Well, you could if you wanted to. But I think you could go to university! You're very smart."

"University?"

"Yes! My neighbour's son is in town visiting from Queen's, and he says university is an awful lot of fun. But I don't want to go to university. I want to be a nurse! I think it would be honourable to help people who are sick."

Charlie stopped walking. She had just noticed a small figure turning the corner to walk in front of them. She would have called out to Eugene if she were sensible, but Charlie was terrified of talking to him... she wasn't ready... maybe when she was sixteen like Samantha...

"Eugene!" shouted Joanne, "Hallo, Eugene!"

He turned.

"Oh, hello!"

They jogged and caught up to him.

"Hello, Charlie," he said, his voice like an orchestra performing her name as a symphony.

“Huh-Hullo,” she managed, pretending to be breathless from jogging as her heart pounded in her chest.

Joanne knew how nervous Charlie would be, so she began the conversation.

“Where are you headed, Eugene?”

“Oh, I took a different route home today because I went to see my cousin, but my house is down this way.”

“Oh, our houses are this way too,” said Joanne cheerfully.

A strange moment of silence followed.

“What do you want to be when you grow up, Eugene?” asked Joanne.

“Well, after high school, I’m going to university for mathematics,” he said.

Charlie, who had been trying to steady her breath, inhaled sharply.

“Do-Do you think *I* could go to university?” she blurted.

Eugene pondered her question.

“Well, you have to have lots of money, and if you don’t, you must be very smart so that you can get scholarships.”

“Charlie could get scholarships!” Joanne broke in.

“Well, you’ll have to compete with me for lots of scholarships,” he said coolly.

“I mean, I suppose I could do that,” said Charlie, before timidly joking, “I might be smarter than you someday!”

“No, you won’t,” he said matter-of-factly.

“I could, you know, I could be, just you wait!” she challenged, smiling.

“Trust me, you won’t.”

Charlie didn’t give up.

“Well, I could be in magazines and picture shows and make lots of money, and then I could go to university,” she suggested.

“It’s very hard to get into magazines and picture shows, you know,” Eugene advised, “My cousin is a model in magazines. She says it was quite difficult for her to get hired, and she’s *very* pretty.”

Charlie frowned, looking down at her shoes.

“You-you don’t think I’m very pretty?” she asked him.

This surprised him. He furrowed his brow and rounded his lips the way Charlie liked before replying, “Not really—no—well—I don’t know.”

She looked at him, and then at her shoes again, biting her lip, trying desperately not to cry.

Joanne tried to save the conversation.

“Well, when I grow up, I want to be a nurse.”

“You might have a chance, if they let you,” said Eugene.

Joanne stopped walking; they had reached the intersection where she went left and Charlie went right. Eugene looked like he was going to continue straight.

“What! What do you mean?” asked Joanne.

“Well, don’t you know? All of the Japs like you are going to be deported,” he said, maintaining his matter-of-fact tone.

Charlie gasped. She opened her mouth to voice how horrible that would be, but her voice cracked and no sound came out.

“That’s impossible!” said Joanne defensively.

“They’re enemies of the state,” Eugene informed them.

Joanne was distraught.

“I-well, I’ve lived in Canada all my life! I’ve never even been to Japan! Surely they don’t mean me. Surely they’ll let me become a nurse.”

“Why, why, of course they will!” said Charlie, regaining her composure, “No one has any reason to take you away. It’s an honourable thing to want to help people, just like you said.”

Eugene only shrugged.

“Anyway, goodbye,” he said.

“Bye,” said the girls as he walked off.

Joanne turned to Charlie.

“You know, Charlie, I don’t care what Eugene Lawrence says because I am staying right here and I am going to become a nurse and that is that,” she said resolutely.

Then all of the three were on their way, each walking very quickly for his or her own reason.

Joanne strode purposefully down her street, and at dinner she would break the news that she was going to become a nurse to her parents, who would receive it well, and then she would steadfastly carry on about her life.

And Eugene would go home and practice his piano and his math and ask his mother how her day was and think about hockey and school and other things that were not Joanne and were most definitely not Charlie. But Charlie would keep her chin up all the way to her house, where she would find her mother and Samantha in tears because they had finally received a letter from her father saying that he was coming home. And that evening she would do her chores and not complain once about boredom, and then she would go exploring in the forest under Samantha's lazy supervision and be glad that she was twelve and not sixteen. And she would go straight to sleep that night because there would be no shouting match, and the next morning she would prance gaily down the stairs in her beloved nightgown to wake her mother from her sleep, which had been greatly shortened by the odd Friday night hours at the factory. Her mother would lie there watching sleepily as Charlie would open the closet and fish out her father's coat and wrap it around herself so that she could smell like him. And she would skip to the bathroom and look in the mirror at her nose that stuck out of her face like a pin and decide that she was pretty and that nobody in particular needed to know that for it to be true.

**** Maitland Banting Silver Quill Award Winner**

Age 15
Short Story, 2nd Place

A Collection of Letters

By Meaghan Flokstra

Dear Marie,

There's this little alley behind that tattoo parlour—"Think Ink"—on Grey Street that tempts few to go down—it smells like cat pee and feels claustrophobic—but I think you'd like it. After all, you still like art as much as you used to, right?

I wouldn't have ventured in myself if it weren't for Alek catching a glimpse of colour down there... he really can't resist street art, can he? He got some great pictures. I'll have him print some off so I can include them in your next letter. Really, Marie—it's beautiful. You can tell the art has been done by one artist, too. There's just something in the tone and emotion put into it that belongs to solely one person.

There was this one piece of a looming city overlooking a small, decrepit playground that you would have adored. It reminded me of you immediately. Seriously, Marie—this alley was made for you.

Love always,

Jo

Skye,

I did what you suggested to help with the pain. Art.

I found myself an alley. I found myself some spray paint. And I covered the walls with colour.

There is little space left now. I've filled it all up with overlapping depictions of melancholy. Each colour, each detail, each square centimetre oozes misery. I can't stand it.

And I'm addicted to it.

I need your help, Skye. I need you. Why else would I do something as ridiculous as write a letter?

Help me.

You told me to stay away from dangerous things, things I could get addicted to. You told me to find a healthy outlet, like art. Art is addictive. I go back every day. I skip school. I forget to eat. I sit there and dare the cops to come find me for hours after packing away the cans of spray paint. One day I'll wait so long that I'll waste away, and someone'll find my decaying corpse surrounded by the illegal relics of my tortured teenage soul.

What a legacy.

-Emerson

Dear Marie,

I went back to the alley. Alek's pictures of the city-playground thing didn't quite capture it right, but he was too busy to go back right now to get better pictures and... I'm impatient. Yeah, yeah, I know you don't like me going downtown on my own but...Whatever. I may have no excuses, but I also have no regret.

She was there, Marie. The artist. I saw her. It's an Asian girl, tall with bleached hair. I accidentally made eye contact with her... There is a deep sorrow in her eyes, Marie, and dark bags underneath them. She looks... haunted.

Should I say hello? We're probably roughly the same age, so it wouldn't be too creepy. But what if she'd rather I just left her alone? Besides, what are the odds of me finding her again?

Long story short, no pictures for you. For now.

Sincerely,

Jo

Skye,

Some kid caught me working.

Anyway, some girl wandered into my alley. Her shock to see me was apparent in the way she froze, gaping, then ran off. Some clean cut kid, too. Don't know what she's doing out there by "Think Ink" and a handful of other shady shops.

I was angry when I saw her. I wanted her gone, but not just for peace and quiet. It hurt me to have her there. But why? Why? I've been wondering that for hours now and I think I've figured it out.

You. You're the problem. I don't want anyone seeing my work but you. I want it to be you wandering down into that alley. I want you to see all my pain, and then hold me and wipe away my tears like you used to.

Come to the alley, Skye, any way you can. I'm begging you.

That kid better not report me to the cops or something. Not that they'd care about anything happening on that side of town...

"Emmy, stop being so bitter." That's what you'd say.

Too bad you're not around to say it. Too bad that you're part of why I'm bitter. Too bad.

-Emerson

Dear Marie,

I've gone back after school every day for the past week, and I finally found her again. I'd dared to say hi.

She'd glared at me. And swore. And gestured rudely.

I told her my name.

She ignored me.

I told her that Jo is actually short for Joanna.

She ignored me.

I told that my favourite colour is blue, that I still colour with crayons, that I prefer tea to coffee.

I told her that my most unrealistic dream is to cure cancer (but I didn't tell her why).

And do you know what she did? She sighed. And answered. "Emerson. Dark red. I haven't used any medium other than spray paint in forever. Coffee is better. And my most unrealistic dream is to get my life together. Ha."

Well, you always told me I need to think before I speak. "Of course you're a coffee drinker, with

that bitter tone of voice."

You should have seen the look she gave me.

But you know what? We talked for an hour. She's hard and she's cold, but she's sad and she's lonely.

Marie. Wouldn't you be proud of me?

Your dearest sister,

Jo

Skye,

That kid came back.

And she talked to me. And talked. And talked. And talked until I finally gave in, and then she talked some more.

She reminds me of you and it hurts.

-Emerson

Dear Marie,

I kept going back until I found her again.

We talked and talked (mostly me) about nothing in particular, and then all of the sudden the conversation turned deeper.

I told her about you. I told her that you died from cancer. I told her that I miss you too much after these three years. I told that I still write you letters. And I feel better.

Her sister died, too. Twenty-seven months ago, her older sister Skye died. And that's not all—her dad had disappeared shortly after her birth, and her mom had disappeared shortly after her sister's eighteenth birthday. No wonder she's so sad, so angry, so bitter. I was so insensitive, Marie.

But she's not angry.

She thanked me. She rarely says anything, and today she told me her deepest sorrows and then thanked me?

And you won't believe it: she writes letters to her sister, too!

Marie, I will always miss you more than I can describe.

But I think I'm finally recovering. And I think she is, too.

With all my heart,

Jo

Skye,

I told her about you. Our parents, too. I told her everything.

She'd told me about how much she missed her dead sister, and I just couldn't stop myself from blurting it out.

She listened. She cared. She related.

Her name is Jo and she is the only thing besides art that has ever made me feel better about you, about our parents, about my future.

I miss you.

-Emerson

Marie,

This is my last letter to you. Probably. You never know I guess.

Let me keep this final one short and sweet: I miss you. I love you.

Goodbye,

Joanna

Skye,

Bye. And thank you.

-Emmy

Age 16

Poetry, 1st Place

Any One

By Ava Rabimpour

Pitch black sky with shining diamonds,
Come back to my home below,
Glowing fires, people dancing,
Welcome child, I warn you though,

Secrets hold a dangerous feeling,
That breaks your heart and burns your soul,
Gaze at lightning, feel the thunder,
As earth below you shakes and slows,

Wind may guide you,
But doubt that I do,
Ask any father of mine,

Black crows cry to warn the forest,
Danger comes at speeds that grow,
Catch your breath and hold it dearly,
Welcome child, I warn you though,

Frost will bite and wolves will chase you,
Fear the monsters of the night,
Bare your teeth with proud defiance,
Train your tongue to strongly fight,

Freedom may soon come,
But doubt that I do,
Ask any mother of mine,

Stand your ground with feet unmoving,
Grant your eyes a daunting glow,
Below you hear your bloodline calling,
Welcome child, I warn you though,

Words will harm and wounds will drain you,
Pain will reign from time to time,
The past will take a turn and slap you,
Dare you give to cheating crime,

They may aid you,
But doubt that I do,
Ask any one of mine.

Age 16
Poetry, 2nd Place

Strange Fruit

By Ruth Masuka

It might not be 1923
and we might not be hanging off trees
but it feels kind of that way to me
it's sickening to see
my people are killed for selling cd's
my people are killed while walking home
eating skittles and drinking iced tea
my people are killed before they turn 13
my people are killed while screaming
"I CAN'T BREATHE"
my people are killed while their hands are up
and they're on their knees
tell me is that the definition of free
not to me
I'm living in a world where my worst nightmares
have become my reality
the media mixing fiction and fact
filling my head with irrationality
because some people got this mentality
that ignores police brutality
increases day by day black lives' fatalities
testing my spirituality
because I'm praying to God every night
but my people are killed in broad daylight
and my entire existence is a long hard fight
to survive
to stay alive
I'm in pain
Because my people's tears
are falling like the rain
I mean how they can not be
when our memories are tainted with
bloodstains
when the graveyards are filled with
our young people's remains.

As we attend their funerals in our Sunday's Best,
our black dresses and suits,
as trees grow above their tombstones
bearing strange fruit.

Age 16

Short Story, 1st Place

Toolboxes and Telephones

By Hannah T. Rosales

Often, the Bodzin residence awoke to a ring and ended with an “I’m still on the phone!” Most of the calls were for Mr Bodzin. It’s not that Mr Bodzin loved talking; rather, the town loved talking to him.

“Picking up on what we were talking about at Church yesterday,” said the caller, skipping a morning greeting or hello. “Are you sure that Mel would appreciate it?”

“Oh, yes! Throw that party!” Mr Bodzin advised. His voice was suited for television commercials. “Show her that you love her while she’s still alive.”

His advice consisted of clichés, stolen quotes, or whatever he was feeling at the moment. Nonetheless, the town sought his grand sayings.

As Mr Bodzin chattered on the telephone, his wife crept out the front door. Mrs Bodzin’s toolbox followed after her – but one could say that it is Mrs Bodzin that followed after the box. She had adorned her small companion with a fresh coat of pink. Last month it was neon yellow. Mrs Bodzin believed that if she could not freshen her aging face, then the least she could do was arrive fashionably.

“What’s the matter now, Henry?” Mrs Bodzin yelled, pulling into the driveway of her young client.

“It’s something minor this time,” Henry yelled back. “Very minor. It’s my dresser.”

Out of her many appointments a week, most visits ended up in Henry’s house. Sometimes, he resembled the younger version of Mr Bodzin – charismatic, curious, and confident. Perhaps that’s why Mrs. Bodzin was fond of the young man. Or was it Henry’s lilac-coloured walls? She wasn’t quite sure, but she did know that he was her favourite customer.

“So, how did this happen?” Mrs Bodzin asked as she peered at the broken dresser’s hinges. The drawers couldn’t seem to fit into their appointed slots.

“Well, in fact, I was on the phone with your husband,” Henry began, unnecessarily gesticulating with his hands – his lengthy descriptions were enough. “I was asking him for advice about Mel.”

He waited for Mrs Bodzin to nod her head before continuing.

“I was thinking of throwing her a party. But you see – I get really anxious. Extremely anxious, Mrs Bodzin. I know that’s hard to believe,” Henry rambled, as Mrs Bodzin picked away at screws. “So, I was pacing around and about this small room. Had been thinking furiously as Mr Bodzin gave me his stellar advice. You’re so lucky to have him, you know? He’s such a great man. I was listening so intently that I bumped into my dresser and it fell. Oh dear, I hope I didn’t damage it majorly!”

“Don’t fret,” Mrs. Bodzin gave him an assuring smile. “It’s nothing I can’t handle.”

Back in the Bodzin kitchen, Mr Bodzin was cooking potato casserole for dinner. He wasn’t sure of the last time his wife joined him for dinner, but he did remember how he taught her his special recipe.

“I thought all was lost, Mr Bodzin,” sniffled Mel through Mr Bodzin’s speakerphone. “Thank you so much for consoling me.”

He wagged his finger as if Mel was present in the room. “Oh, darling, don’t you worry. Don’t let the misunderstandings and the lack of communication prevail!”

“Alright,” Mel giggled. “You go and enjoy dinner with your wife now, sir. She is so blessed to have a husband like you.”

Mr Bodzin chuckled as the chirpy girl hung up. Outside, the streetlights began to animate the suburbs for the night. At the same time, Mrs Bodzin’s headlights came around the curb. That evening, it was a dinner for two. Mr Bodzin sighed as he prepared his wife’s side of the long dining table.

“I am so tired,” Mrs Bodzin muttered as she entered the kitchen. She immediately poured herself a glass of red wine.

“Were you up at Henry’s?” asked Mr Bodzin.

“Yes.” A small pause. Mrs Bodzin took a long sip and gave her husband a side eye. She leaned back on the counter, her hips barely meeting the top. “He told me you gave him advice about Mel. The kid was so happy about it that he even made you a card. It’s back in the car, though.”

Using their best dishware, Mr Bodzin strategically arranged the table. He shrugged and said, “Henry’s a good kid.”

“I suppose,” Mrs Bodzin said. “What did you cook? That smells nice, Judah.”

A small smile quivered up Mr Bodzin’s face. “Potato casserole. Let’s eat.”

“Oh.” Mrs Bodzin pitifully looked at the prepared food. “I already had dinner at Henry’s.”

“Nice one, Ava,” gritted Mr Bodzin.

“I didn’t know you’d be having dinner late tonight,” winced Mrs Bodzin. “You were chattering all day weren’t you?”

“Excuse you?”

“Your head is always up in other people’s problems!” exclaimed Mrs Bodzin.

“Yeah? Well, they need me. What’s *your* problem, Ava? You’re never even home.”

“Someone needs to make money, Judah!”

“My back is—”

“Don’t even pull a sad show,” Mrs Bodzin interrupted. “Why don’t you take care of your health and actually eat on time?”

Mr Bodzin shook his head. He took his seat at the table, neglected his wife’s question, and started to eat. Mrs Bodzin threw her empty glass into the sink. She grabbed an apple from the counter and retreated to the living room. The household filled with a heavy silence. It had been awhile since they had exchanged such words in a night.

Nonetheless, the telephone protruded the words unsaid.

“Mr Bodzin?”

“You again, Mel?” Mr Bodzin laughed into the phone. “What are you up to now?”

“I’m calling to thank you for bearing with me today,” stated Mel.

“Yeah!” a male voice erupted. “Thanks, Mr Bodzin!”

“That was Henry,” chuckled Mel. “We were just talking about how we admire you and Mrs Bodzin. Always accessible and ready to help people in the town. Henry and I hope to be like you two.”

Mr Bodzin looked towards the living room where his wife sat. He stammered, “You want to be like us? You kids are adorable!”

“Of course! Anyway, Henry and I have a lot of catching up to do. Good night, Mr Bodzin.”

He hung up and peeked into the living room. Mrs Bodzin was napping on the couch. He grunted and headed towards their bedroom.

The telephone rang again. Mr Bodzin did not pick up the phone.

**** Maitland Banting Silver Quill Award – Honourable Mention**

Age 16

Short Story, 2nd Place

The Trade

By Claire Amadio

This pounding bass is drilling into my skull, and if I don't get out of here soon, my brain will spill out and I will die here in this club. I watch Audrey mingle with her other boyfriends on the dance floor, trying to figure out exactly where to find what while they put their hands all over her. I don't understand what it is about her that they can bring themselves to like. Maybe she's got a nice figure, but the girl looks like a walking Claire's store with her tight neon halter top, poufy black skirt, and more cheap accessories than I thought possible for one person to wear.

Ten minutes pass, and I don't even see her slipping through the crowd until she's standing right in front of me. I raise an eyebrow. She smiles and nods. I follow her out the back door and we get into the car.

"Did you find it?" I say. She looks at me, and I notice the eyeliner on her right eye is smudged on the bottom.

"Nothing," she says. I open my mouth to complain but she shushes me and holds an unsteady finger to my lips. "I got an address." Then she giggles, and I drop my head to massage the bridge of my nose.

"Let me drive," I say.

She looks at me indignantly. "No, I'm fine."

"Audrey." She knows she won't win and eventually relents. We switch places and she tells me which turns to make. I stare straight ahead the whole time, but even in my peripheral vision I can see her watching me, features lit up for only fractions of a second as we pass each dimming streetlight.

There's nowhere to park since some inbred in a pickup truck thought it would be a good idea to park across all three spaces. I swear and pound the steering wheel, and Audrey touches my shoulder lightly as if to comfort me. The last thing I want is her tacky plastic claws digging into me, and I tell her as much. She quiets down and I park on the dead grass.

We both exit the car and stare up at the flickering laundromat sign, then at the small neon 'open' sign hanging in the cracked window beside the door. I gently push on the door, which rings a little bell and slams into the wall. The room is bright white with buzzing fluorescent lights and washing

machines lining the walls. A small radio on the front desk crackles with an indecipherable classic rock song.

A man emerges from the void of the back room with matted brown-grey hair tied back and his clothes hanging off his gaunt figure. He gives me the once over, but his eyes linger on Audrey.

“No laundry?” he eventually says.

“No,” I agree, shaking my head and taking a step forward. “I’m here for a phone.”

“Ah,” the clerk says and makes his way over to the desk. He pulls out a keyring with a dozen or so keys hanging off it and uses one of them to unlock a drawer. “We get a lot of lost stuff in here. Policy says we’re not responsible but you can have any of it back for a small fee.” At the word ‘fee’ the man’s lips pull back into a sly grin. “So, what do you want? Newer models’ll cost you a bit more, but if you’re just looking for a burner, the flat rate’s twenty bucks.”

I frown and lean across the desk, dropping my head so my eyes level with his. “I’m looking for *my* phone.” He chuckles and yawns.

“Sure you are. I’ve seen your face, kid. I know who you are. If you don’t want to arrange a deal, then you can leave.” Audrey’s nails click against each other while she fidgets. I count back from ten and take a deep breath.

“Fine. I have fifty bucks. Let me see what you have.”

“By all means, take a look,” he says, stepping aside so I can browse the drawer of lost and forgotten belongings. The selection is limited to about twenty phones, none of which are mine.

“No, it’s not here,” I breathe in defeat. “Come on, Audrey, let’s go.” I walk towards the door but she grabs my wrist and looks me in the eye.

“*They said it was here,*” she hisses, pointing to the back room with her eyes.

“Of course,” pipes up the clerk, “There is one more.” My heart beats faster. The look on his face says he knows more than he’s letting on. “Follow me, Lucas.”

“Do I know you?” I ask. I follow him into the back room, but make sure to keep a good distance in case things go south.

“Me? No, probably not, but you did seem to know my brother. Joe Rodiek ring any bells?” The way his shoulders hunch over reminds me of a vulture, like I’m some roadkill he’s about to tear into. I shrug.

“Not really,” I reply.

“Huh,” he says. “That’s funny, because you’ve got an awful lot of pictures of you posing with his body on that phone of yours. Not funny because of what you did, obviously, but funny in the sense that you didn’t even bother learning his name.” I put my hands up in weak defence and stumble backward towards the door.

“Look, I--” I start, but the clerk shushes me and smiles.

“No, no, I don't want your apologies. If I wanted those, I could've gotten them in court. I'm willing to propose a trade,” he says. “Is that your girlfriend?” he asks, raising an eyebrow at the girl.

“Yes.”

“Do you love her?”

“...Yeah.”

“In that case, you can leave with one: the phone or the girl. Leave with the girl and the police get a new number one suspect. Leave with the phone and I'll call us even.”

It's at this moment that Audrey decides to start crying. I only catch the occasional “love” and “please” from her babbling and I pull her into a hug. She smears her full face of makeup into my shoulder and it takes all my willpower to not push her away.

“I can't go to jail, baby,” I whisper to her. Turning back to the clerk, I say, “I'll take the phone.” Audrey lets out a shrill sob and pounds weakly on my chest with her fists. She continues to scream and cry as the clerk pulls my phone from his back pocket and drops it into my hand, while at the same time taking Audrey's brightly-coloured hair into his other fist.

“Pleasure doing business with you,” he says. I nod and quickly exit the building, the bell on the door ringing behind me. I get back into the car and a sense of relief washes over me as I start up the engine.

I pull out onto the road and wonder where I'll go next. There's no more evidence, no more bounty on my head, and no one to complain about me.

It isn't until I'm already past the city limits that my phone vibrates with a text message. With one hand on the wheel, I glance down to see Audrey and the clerk staring back at me from the glowing phone screen.

Audrey's eyes are wide and vacant, and she's not wearing her own clothes. Replacing her usual exaggerated girlish outfit is a beautiful sequined evening dress. The clerk poses beside her limp figure, smiling with his hand on her shoulder to prop her up. Nausea jumps from my stomach to my throat. No matter what I thought of her, she didn't deserve that. My mind wanders back to Joe; back to when Audrey and I were dumb and drugged up enough to think committing a crime together would be a bonding experience.

I think back to when we broke into the supposedly empty house at four in the morning, giggling like excited kids on a school trip. When Audrey found him, he wasn't a person to us; he was a dare. I killed him and she placed a kiss on my cheek. We dressed him up in his wife's clothes. Took pictures. Laughed. Made him into a mockery of a human being. It wasn't wrong as long as we didn't get caught. Naturally, karma has its way of dealing with creeps like us. Audrey left my phone on the scene. His brother found the man the next day, swiped the phone and vowed revenge. Or so I figure.

My phone lights up with a second image, but I don't have time to see what it is. Trading my girlfriend for my freedom was supposed to make us even, but we'll never be even. I'm only twice guilty. My front wheel digs into the gravel on the side of the road. I veer left. The back slides into the ditch and the car rolls once, twice, three times. The windshield crunches on a drain pipe. My head slams into the window. The airbag deploys.

When I come to, my eyelids are glued shut by dried blood. I pry them open to see daylight and let out a long sigh. *I guess I'll have to pay you back another day.*

Age 17
Poetry, 1st Place

They is (not) Aliens

By Sarah Williams-Habibi

They is intelligent

They is creative

They has hobbies

They is brave

They has hopes

They has dreams

They has things beyond they're 'normality'

They is just like us

Except, they is different

They is not aliens

They're normality do not define they

We not should label they

Normality is what they has

Not who they is

Age 17
Poetry, 2nd Place

cottage

By Katherine Kim

young summer bliss with
sand tickling toes no
home for the night time just
sleepy suns and
you
in my arms
cradled tightly and softly along the shore
line
tidal waves
may reach us
but i
would not mind
to be buried beneath this earth
with you

Age 17

Short Story, 1st Place

5/23/16

By Katherine Kim

From the way I see it, you can watch the same movie ten times in a row, but you can't watch a ten-part-movie-series in a row.

I had tried it with Harry Potter (which, admittedly, is only eight parts), but I fell asleep by the time we hit the Goblet of Fire.

On the other hand, Spiderman (the first one, and the first one only) is the kind of movie I can watch ten times in a row. There's a certain serenity to knowing what will happen each time, and being able to recite the words before they even sound.

I was in my seventh run-through of Spiderman when my older sister invaded my bedroom.

She leaned against the doorframe, her tall figure fitting perfectly in the edges. "Are you seeing the fireworks tonight?"

Mind you, I didn't even know what time it was.

"I think I'll pass," I said.

"Are you watching Spiderman again?"

I shrugged. Burrowed myself deeper into the blankets, and hugged the bowl of popcorn a little tighter.

"Do you have any idea how unhealthy that is?"

Another shrug.

"Do you even open your windows?"

"I like to keep the blinds shut."

Tanya sighed. She took one last look at my pigsty, a full scope of the area, where snack bags infested the ground, indie band posters adorned the walls, and finally she closed the door with a firm click.

Tanya was my alter-ego. Her high school career consisted of head cheerleader, Beer Pong Queen, the sweetheart that stole everyone's hearts, and, wait for it, class valedictorian. Now she pursued

Nursing at this university that was, I don't know, a couple blocks away. For some reason, she *had* to stay home.

Meanwhile, I was two years younger, and pretty much Tanya's shadow: the darker, lumpier, and so called "mysterious" version. I wish I could tell you when I acquired this disposition, but I honestly have no idea.

Within a few minutes, my room was attacked again. This time, by a knock on the door.

"Honey." My mother's voice. "You should really come out to see the fireworks. It's Victoria Day. A time for family."

I pretended not to hear.

She let out a heavy breath. Her hand wrapped around the doorknob. "Emilia, don't make me come in."

"I'm not asking you to."

"But you've been locked in there all day!"

I turned up the volume of my movie. That was always the easier option: Saying nothing. Because you didn't have to wait for the other person's response. Silence let you kill the conversation. It let you avoid worrying about the next words you had to say.

My mother eventually left, the sound of her gentle footsteps fading away. She had a habit of walking like she was afraid of the ground. Fragile, yet with respect.

That was another form of comfort: Always knowing how and when people would leave.

The fireworks didn't start until later that night, nor did the bombardment of text messages on my phone.

RAE: yo

RAE: r u still watching that movie

RAE: pew pew spiderman pew pew

RAE: emilia

RAE: lets watch fireworks

RAE: ok

RAE: fine

RAE: u can be a lil brat

RAE: <3

I set my phone to silent, and tossed it somewhere in my ever deepening heap of laundry. As much as I loved Rae, there came moments when I just couldn't talk to her. I'm sure that there were always reasons for it, but I could never bring myself to admit them.

Maybe Rae was just too good a friend, and I was too bad a person.

By now, my family was out of the house (the sound of our garage door opening is absolutely deafening), and I could already envision their conversation in the car ride down to Some City Park With Some Fireworks.

What are we going to do with Emilia?

All she does is stay home.

She didn't even apply for university!

Do you think something's wrong?

No, nothing is wrong. Nothing was ever wrong. I tuned out the imaginary voices and returned to my movie.

Do you think something's wrong?

After finishing my official eighth run-through of Spiderman, I headed down to the washroom to brush my teeth. Those were the main times my family got to see me. My father always scolded me for not having dinner together, but it wasn't like I'd make the atmosphere better. And it wasn't like he was home that often either.

I pulled my hair back in a pony and picked out my toothbrush. It was dark blue, hanging out next to Tanya's pink one. As I brushed my teeth, I walked around the empty house, certain that the only eyes on me were the ones in the pictures.

The pictures were funny. The majority of them were taken when Tanya and I were just kids. We were pretty similar back then. Same hair, same eyes, same skin.

I moved down to Tanya's bedroom. She always left the door open, as though inviting people to come in, to see into her life. There were hundreds of photos stuck on her walls, and Christmas lights hung along the windows. She had her curtains pulled open, and I wondered how many people in the neighbourhood saw her every night.

A photo on the wall caught my eye. It was Tanya at Prom. A cliché picture of her and her date, as she placed the boutonniere on the guy's suit. They were laughing; they were glowing; they were happy.

My own Prom had happened just a few weeks ago. But that wasn't something I enjoyed thinking about.

Instead, I found myself taking Tanya's Prom photo off the wall, and holding it in my hands. A drop of toothpaste landed on the boy's face.

I smiled.

I tucked the photo in my sweater pocket, and moved onto the next memory, the next piece of my sister's life collage. There were so many simple moments captured, forever frozen in the small sheets of film.

Another photo of Prom: Her and her friends dancing, arms flailing, teeth flashing white.

A selfie at camp: Friends posing with their tongues stuck out, typical duck faces.

A family photo shoot: Her and Grandmother smiling, peaceful.

I took down each of these photos. They were clenched in my grip, while the wall had new empty spaces. Blank portions, like missing memories in a brain with Alzheimer's.

Whoever said you needed a time machine, when you had a camera? These were all black holes into the past. Into a place where everything was already done. The past was nothing more than a movie that played in the backs of our minds when we were lonely.

With the stack of photos in my pocket, I began my way back to the washroom. But a firework sounded - an eruption of sorts, a loud series of bullets - and I wondered for a moment, just a moment, what I was missing out on. If I was missing out on another memory to be captured in photography. Another scene in the movie of my life.

But when I looked out the window of Tanya's bedroom, I saw nothing. While I could hear the fireworks, I could not find them at all in the blackness of the sky. Perhaps they were gunshots instead. Perhaps people were dying on the sidewalk below me, and it was all being mistaken for fireworks.

I still waited. I stood with the calmness of a flower stem, and stared out the window. The whole neighbourhood could probably see me, and for once, I wouldn't be a shadow. I wouldn't be Tanya's lumpy shadow - instead, for once, I could be the light. That illuminated figure everyone fixed their gaze upon.

So maybe I was thankful the fireworks didn't come.

I was finally something worth seeing.

Tanya's photos weighed heavy in my sweater pockets. When I got back to my bedroom, I stuffed them in my desk drawer.

"We're home!" My father's voice rumbled with the satanic garage door. Shoes slapped on house welcome mats; familiar footsteps made more footprints on the floor.

Meanwhile, the Victoria Day bullets were playing in the backdrop of my ears. But I knew that even if I looked out, the sky would still be empty. I checked my phone instead.

RAE: do u hear the fireworks?

That was the only message in my inbox. A strange loneliness filled my chest.

EMILIA: Yeah, I do

She never failed to respond in time.

RAE: hey, u okay?

EMILIA: Why wouldn't I be?

RAE: u didnt reply to any of my txts this weekend

EMILIA: You know I'm lazy

E: but this time it felt diffrent

EMILIA: I'm fine, don't worry

RAE: thats what u said last week

EMILIA: It's because I'm actually fine

RAE:k. the fireworks were nice at the park

EMILIA: You went?

RAE: let me call u

"Hello?" She always spoke too loud on the phone. "I just needed to hear your voice; texting gets shallow. Emilia?"

I held my breath.

"Are you seriously ignoring me? You've been acting hella weird ever since Prom."

"Nothing happened at Prom."

"So *now* you speak." She exhaled heavily, and a firework on her end of the line cracked. "I know you said you were okay, but I'm still concerned."

I contemplated hanging up.

"What happened at Prom was serious. I had never seen you cry before and-"

I hung up.

I didn't need to go back to the past. I didn't need to see my own movie replay in the backs of my eyelids. It was better watching other people's lives.

But I couldn't bring myself to hit the play button on the TV anymore. To step into another black hole that I had already learned the physics behind.

More fireworks smashed against the sky.

More reminders of things I couldn't reach.

I looked out my bedroom window for the first time in weeks. And I prayed that there would be something out there. A flash of light to tell me there was hope. Or just something I could hold onto when it felt like the world was spinning and I was on a string, floating away to someplace I didn't want to be, nor understand.

"Emilia?" Tanya's voice echoed through my door like a firework of its own kind. "We came back just a few minutes ago. Can I talk to you?"

People shared first kisses, summer memories, and dates beneath these fireworks.

"Emilia, I'm coming in-"

Tanya's eyes pierced my shaking spine.

"Emilia." She rushed to my side. Grabbed my shoulder. "Are you okay?"

I don't know.

"Come here." She wrapped her arms around me, buried the back of my head into her chest. She held me against her heart, and this was the closest I had been to my sister in years. "Rae told me everything. We met her at the park. She was worried for you."

Worried for me.

"You don't have to tell me what's wrong. You don't have to explain to me what happened at Prom, or whatever happened before that, after that, and the things in between. Sometimes... we react. And we can't control it."

I was never enough.

"You have always been enough," she said. "Just look outside, Emilia."

But I had already been looking.

And there they were.

There they were.

Age 17

Short Story, 2nd Place

A Love Story

By Moboluwajide Joseph

He felt a sort of resentment towards the new boy. Tirenì with his smooth black ‘fro that was always neat. Even when Tirenì ran his hands repeatedly through them in an effort to look unkempt (unkempt was the new style), they look disorganized but in a perfect symmetrical fashion that lent an order to the ruffles and tufts. His hair did not bunch together in tiny clump that were aptly referred to as *Koko Waves*. He did not have to yank on his hair repeatedly to get it into a passable state and then repeat the torture at intervals to avoid having is pate scraped and shining under the sun. No this was Tolani’s burden and he had no choice but to continue bearing it.

Tirenì with the knowing look as he narrated his past exploits, how he purchase and used a condom at an age where Tolani was still firmly tied to some apron strings. How she had come back repeatedly to beg for more and in his benevolence he had granted her this wish, (Tolani did not wholeheartedly believe this point).

Tirenì with more money than he knew what to do with. It was a well-known fact that the Adetola’s breathed, drank and swam in money. With ancestors three generations back who had been plundering politicians (but wise plundering politicians who stole sensibly and gained the grudging admiration of their people), this wasn’t so far-fetched. But the Adetola’s were loved, it was a given that elected public officers would steal, what the people wanted were leaders who while stealing would actually leave behind a beneficial legacy to the people. The Adetolas had not disappointed in this respect.

However, a good deal of admiration and liking outweighed this. It wasn’t Tirenì’s fault that he was an African Adonis or that he radiated charm and money. No, that was all on the Good Lord. What he could choose however were his actions and from the moment they had met Tirenì had always acted with nothing but the purest intentions. He was the golden boy. Tolani consistently wished that he had been born a dunce so he could outshine him with a wide gap in at least one area. But no amount of rubbing was going to produce any benevolent genies. Besides, they were Nigerians, if a glowing spirit poked his head out of a kettle you had been polishing, you ran for the matches and anointing oil.

Tolani did not realize he harbored resentment of any sort, till he first kissed Morenike., the sun filtering through the leaves of the orange tree under which they had been seating, (this was Orombo Avenue after all). They had been laughing over her love for Fela. He could still remember how he had first met her, it was seared, frozen and welded onto his heart for all eternity.

He did not notice the saxophone until much later, the brass glinting in the morning light. Her hair had hung in thick black dreads that half concealed her oval face as her back had rested against the self-same orange tree. The light filtering through the leaves had a kaleidoscope of golds and oranges. Her lithe profile had been clad only in a long sleeved white shirt that was too big for her yet seemed at home draped over her with the sleeves rolled up and faded blue jeans that clung to her legs. A brass curling bracelet that curled around one of her arms seemed to pulse with its own life.

It was then he had noticed that her hands were holding a saxophone which she was intently playing, her eyes closed and completely lost in a trance. It was then that he became conscious that his body was swaying slightly to the music. The music was itself a world of beauty, he felt a need to cry and to laugh and to fly on its wings. He did not know the song but he felt sure it was one that screamed of aching loss and the silence that followed in its wake were whispers of redemption.

She changed tunes just then, smoothly and skillfully. She changed to one of the songs he had learnt back home, a simple song but what she did with it transformed it into a masterpiece that belonged somewhere opulent and tasteful not in a backyard amongst overgrown weeds with his wretched self as her sole audience. Yet, she played on and he felt her music reaching out invisible hands to tug out the lyrics to the song. He stubbornly held the back and it took him a while to realize that he was singing now, throaty at first and then louder.

****"Ko ma sibi to dabi ile,***

Ilu Ikenne

Ko ma sibi temi fe

Bi'lu tabi mi."*

And then on and on till tears had joined to her music and his singing. And he knew that in that instant she had reached out a phantom hand and changed something in him. She had brought him a little piece of home in the madness that was Lagos. She stopped abruptly once he had let loose a wail of anguish as though she had been yanked by some invisible thread. Her eyes opened, slowly like someone waking from a pleasant dream.

She had let him cry his heart out for all that he had love, lost and left behind. Then she started speaking. She had a startling voice that was deep and husky and revealed within a sentence that she had been born in England.

I know what it's like to be yanked from home," she had said and then picking up her saxophone had walked away. That had been the first of a long string of musical encounters till the one where he had first kissed her.

"I sometimes wish I had come of age when Fela was alive," she said, her voice wistful as her head lay in his lap and he ran his hand through the long black mess of it.

"You would have joined his harem?" His tone—he hoped was not too incredulous. Morenike had always been one of those twenty-first century feminists who believed less in gender equality and more feminine superiority. For him though, she had conceded that no woman would ever be able to match his talent or skill as a writer. When she said this, he felt fuzzy and warm inside. It was a new feeling and he had liked it.

"Why not? He was a legend." Her voice dared him to disagree, he wisely chickened out.

“You that have no *bum-bum** to shake. What makes you think he’d have considered you?”

“I’m a legend in the making. Our fates would have been inextricably tied.” *What the bloody hell does inextricably mean?* He wonders.

Her voice is breathy and she is looking at him in such a way that he knows that she is no longer talking about her and Fela. And this same voice that whispers that they have stumbled their way into uncharted waters, grips his shoulder and whispers to him that her lips are full. His gaze moves there and he realizes the voice is right. Her lips are full and glistening. *How has he not noticed that before?* He does not know.

He does not know who moves first but suddenly her head has risen and his head is descending and they meet somewhere in the middle and they are kissing. Somehow she gets into a sitting position and his hands are steadily tracing her cheekbones and she is pressed against him and he can feel everything and he is thankful to whatever pantheon has ensured her head is no longer on his laps.

Tireni would have better control over himself; he thinks and then begins to wonder if he is doing it right. If Tireni would have used less tongue, if he would have pressed up so close to her and be a breath from her discovering how *affected* he was.

She stops and pulls away to look him fully in the eyes, her eyes still glazed over and he worries that despite his efforts she has discovered how affected he is and she is utterly disgusted.

“I would have asked if the attraction wore off but then,” her voice still breathy but he hears her perfectly and doesn’t miss the careless wave of her hand at his tell-tale bulge, punctuating her comment or the laughter coating her words.

“You were the one who pulled away,” he tries to turn his torso away from her gaze until he has a firmer control on himself.

“Because you seemed to waver in intensity and I didn’t want to keep you, if you weren’t interested.”

“But that question has been answered for you.”

He swears and then tells her that he had pulled back because he felt he wasn’t doing it right or good enough for her.

“Tolani, I say this with all the kindness in the world. I will never be deserving of you, even if I had a dowry the size of the coffers of the entire Security Council of the U.N.”

“You can’t mean that.”

“I do.”

She looks at him steadily for a moment then reaches for her saxophone nestled next to her and closing her eyes begins to play. The tune is mournful and he wonders what could possibly have happened to her that makes her capable of playing a dirge befitting of the death of an entire civilization and more importantly if she will ever let him get close enough to find out.

But for that evening he knows they are two teenagers sitting under an orange tree with more than just a gnarled root separating them and yet daring to be a tentative bridge.

***bum-bum- ass/posterior/butt**

***English translation of song:**

There is no place like home,

Ikenne town,

There's no other place I'd rather be

Than my town.

Age 18
Poetry, 1st Place

A poem for no one who wants to read it.

By Rachel Turner

Pro Ana.

Perfecting the art of emptiness,

Pro Ana

Helps you feed your addiction without ever feeding yourself.

Pro Ana.

Here's some tips on easing into your suicide.

Pro Ana.

Spin around in circles so you're too dizzy and nauseous to eat.

Pro Ana.

If you're hungry try sipping some hot green tea, it will suppress your appetite.

Pro Ana.

Do crunches

Clean something

Take a nap

Go for a run

Stand in front of the mirror and pinch your fat

Pro Ana

Watch other people eat and notice how disgusting it looks

Pro Ana

Try enjoying your hunger pains. They won't be here for long because neither will you.

Pro Ana

Being thin is more important than being healthy... Or even alive

Pro Ana

When the bones start to show it doesn't mean you're skinny it means there is more to lose.

Pro Ana

These are the rules:

I never read them but I knew them

Pro Ana

I never knew this existed but I followed it exactly

I was a perfect disciple

Pro Ana

Left me shaking

Made me remember too much

Had me sit crying over my laptop, wondering how someone could create this

But what's really fucked up, is that

Pro Ana

Woke up some ancient part of me, and she smiled.

**** HAALSA Young Poet's Award Co-Winner**

Age 18
Poetry, 2nd Place

Obsessive and Intrusive

By *Emily Makschuk*

I

Toss, turn, cold sweat.
Like running on sand.
Calling out with no voice.
Open eyes see nothing.
And it's there.
At the end of the bed.
Sometimes a flash of it in the corner.
Sometimes it drags you down the hall.
You always wake up, but there's always the fear
That one night, you won't.

II

It's so real sometimes.
After it's done.
I felt it separate, I felt it pierce, I felt it break.
I know how that feels.
I think I do.
That sinking feeling after:
"This is real."
Looked straight into their eyes
'til they went grey – lifeless.
I did it with my hands.
It's weird seeing them when I wake up.

III

Flashes of violence
More than unwelcome
Unwanted.
Looking into their eyes
Making small talk

Then a flash
Beaten to a pulp
Hacking, carving through-
Taking sips of coffee,
Laughing at jokes
A flash
Spattered on the walls
Screams, tears.
Less talking, more flinching.
Awkward pauses.
Less sips of coffee.
Quietly disgusted.
There is a difference between
Thought
And action.

Age 18

Short Story, 1st Place

A Cure for a Virgin Mind

By *Portia Witte*

The warmth of the soggy coastal air envelops me as I awake to my vibrant six-year-old daughter's subtle poking at my tender leg. Emerging from the granulated shards of glass, rock and minerals, she is the uncorrupted Venus to my scorched and polluted Earth. Her life-giving smile banishes my earlier thoughts of surrendering and calms my agitated muscles. Excitedly, she requests for me to inspect the bucket of shells she has recently plucked from the sodden ground. In my coarse voice I whisper to her,

"Baby, would you like me to clean them for you?"

Her timid eyes look inquisitively at the mound of shells, and then back at me, and replies,

"No mommy, I can do it...but why don't you come look for more with me? I don't have enough to decorate my castle."

My throat tightens, the dribbles of saliva evaporate from my tongue and my pupils widen, forcing the blood surrounding my eyes to trickle into my thoughts. Her simple question, posed so lovingly, chokes the impulsive response labelled *Truth* from being incorporated into my speech. Pausing for almost too long, I lift her up by her lanky arms and position her on my lap. Concentrating on the rhythmic, ghost-like sails of a passing boat, I reply by saying,

"Mommy is a bit too tired today, sweetheart, I had some bad dreams last night and couldn't get to sleep."

Her golden cheeks lift slightly as she smiles in response to my third lie of the day.

Gathering her bucket and shovel, she returns to her place on the beach, as if uninterrupted, and with the same swiftness as a honey bee continues to labor.

It's becoming increasingly difficult to formulate creative excuses for the expanding vocabulary of a six-year-old. Luckily, my mind has been trained in the art of self-preservation and will likely implode before lighting the *C-bomb* on a child learning to decipher fragments of beer bottles from "lost treasures of the sea". The guilt, although it obliterates any self-confidence I have left, is my only motivation to persist in my Blitzkrieg against my dismantling body. One day, never having to lie to her about how my body has betrayed me, is what sends me to a new doctor every week in search of some miraculous cure. It is this guilt that has brought me to this very beach in the most southern

peninsula of North America. It is this tumor of the mind that has dragged me twenty-five hundred kilometres from where I was told that the “granola heads” that have been shoving wheat grass down my throat and up my butt for the past week weren’t going to do anything for my illness (other than expel every drug still lingering in my body) that has brought me here. It is this urge, more persistent than those life-altering cancer cells, that lengthens my battle. I guess one could say that *she* is what ultimately determines my life.

The gleaming sun morphs into a sphere of orange as it commences a game of “Hide-and-seek” behind the clouds. Melting deep into the horizon it casts a silhouette over an aspiring Hera still chasing a misfit band of seagulls. She dips in and out of the shallow, unrestricted sea with ease, but the violent lapping of the water against the shoreline strives to inflame a feeling of uneasiness within me. Impulsively, I shoot up from my beach chair and scream,

“Sweetheart, be careful around the water! The tide is coming in, it’s too dangerous!”

She stares at me, perplexed by my awkward, unexpected performance and then obediently dog paddles toward the shore.

I have read countless books written by cancer survivors that have outlined that one of the symptoms of this disease is the idea of being so unbelievably afraid of death, that living becomes an enigma. I’ve never understood how “living”, which is something I’ve done somewhat seamlessly for the past thirty-nine years, can suddenly become a mystery due to an enlarging tumor in my left breast. But alas, I have certainly figured it out. A simple gaze towards the roughening sea is no longer a pleasant sight for me. When the water attacks the innocent, ivory toned beach I envision the wrath and persistence of rapidly multiplying cancer cells annihilating every armoured white blood cell in sight. And unfortunately, according to other opium addicted cancer patients, this isn’t considered a psychedelic drug trip.

It’s fascinating to believe that my daughter experiences a world so abstract and so unparalleled to my own. When her wide eyes focus on the infinite ocean she does not see a world of horror, she sees the thrill of exploration that the illusion-enhancing water provides. She sees the vibrant sun’s reflection, which prompts the emergence of freckles on her delicate nose and cheeks. All these breathtaking views, and yet, she’ll often admire me, but what does she see when she looks in my direction?

The beach is barren, but littered with broken plastic shovels, pop cans and memories. The wind that used to carry a sweltering heat, has since picked up a chilling air that climbs up and down my arms. My daughter instinctively gathers her toys, abandons the shells she deems unworthy and brushes the sand off her thighs. She skips over to me and I gently wrap a fresh, comforting towel around her.

I know what she sees. A woman whose olive toned skin has turned pale and whose chubby face has thinned and retreated. She sees a woman with a Harley Davidson scarf tied around her head concealing a patch of matted “chemo curls” and a woman that believed wearing it would make her feel more badass and adventurous. She sees a woman that would sacrifice anything to avoid destroying her childhood with the shattering effects of hospital visits, chemotherapy, fights with nurses, homeopathic doctors, bad news and midnight sobs.

But more importantly, what she *feels* is the reassuring touch of a mother blocking out the adult world. A gallant prince, one might say, that protects and comforts before returning to a vicious battle.

“Mommy”, she whispers.

“Yes baby.”

“Can I use your cane, I’m too tired to walk.”

“Of course.”

I suppose when she gets a bit older I’ll reluctantly inform her about what my body is in battle against and how it’s been stacking up over the course of a decade. I know that years into the future, she’ll be thankful that her childhood was preserved by a blissful ignorance, I just hope that she won’t be mad that I didn’t tell her that her doctor is a drug dealer, that her father is a witness and that her mother is a liar. All this, just to preserve that beaming smile and a life of unknown for her virgin mind.

Age 18
Short Story, 2nd Place

SOME STORY ABOUT SPAGHETTI – But not really at all.

By Rachel Turner

The man could smell it all the way from the sidewalk. That familiar scent of roasted garlic and marinara sauce. It's been years since he's been here, since he's sat in the busy dining room, listened to the idle chatter and savoured the delicious spaghetti. This used to be his favourite restaurant; he would come every Friday with his mother and they would sit for hours, eating as slowly as possible just so they could enjoy the spectacle of busy lives as people came and went. If he had to pick one thing he missed most about the city, it would undoubtedly be this place. It made perfect sense to him that this would be his first stop upon returning to the city.

He strides into the foyer, his wife and son in tow, and is immediately filled with an odd sense of home. The venue is dimly lit and stuffy, but in an oddly comforting sort of way.

"Table for three?" An overly cheery blonde asks while gathering a pile of menus, her voice squeaky. The man offers her a small nod of confirmation and she leads them to a small booth at the back of the packed restaurant.

Just as the trio settles into their booth a waiter emerges from seemingly nowhere. He's a curious looking man, tall and lanky with long blonde hair tied up in a bun atop his head. There is something familiar about him, but the man can't seem to put his finger on it. He approaches them with a welcoming smile and pulls a small pad of paper and pen from his apron.

"How are you folks doing tonight?" His eyes skim over the guests' faces in a clearly automatic, yet seemingly sincere, manor.

"Quite alright," the man states simply, still trying to place the waiter's face. He knows they've met before and he doesn't feel good about it.

"Great, great," he nods, "can I get you started off with something to drink?" He looks to the man's family.

"Chocolate milk for the boy, a glass of diet sprite for my lovely wife, and I'll have a water."

The waiter pulls his eyes from the woman and boy to meet the man's gaze. "Yes, I'll get right on that, sir," he offers an overly charismatic smile, almost as if he is compensating for something, and walks from the table. The eye contact leaves an odd sense of unease in the man's chest.

The waiter returns a few moments later with the drinks, placing them one by one on the table. As the water is set in front of him, the man notices a mark on the waiter's right hand. It's long jagged, stretching from the webbing between his thumb and index finger all the way to his wrist. It looks like the kind of mark a knife would leave. It looks like the kind of mark his knife would leave.

The man looks up at the waiter in disbelief, then back down at the waiter's hand, making sure he isn't imagining things. To his horror the mark is still there.

His mind begins to wander into the dark corners of his memory. He sees images from that night. The shadowy face of the man chasing him down that alley. His alcohol soaked skin. The strained muscles in his legs. The blood dripping from his knife. His heart beating, beating louder, beating faster. The shouts of revenge. The cries of agony. All because of a stupid drunken mistake.

His chest tightens.

There is no mistaking it, this waiter is was the last person the man saw before leaving the city all those years ago. Or rather, this waiter was the last person who saw the man all those years ago. This waiter was there the night the man had to leave. This waiter watched the man commit the crime which drove him into hiding. This waiter was a witness to murder.

The man looks up to meet the waiter's gaze. His eyes seem kind and unknowing. Is it possible he doesn't remember him? Is it possible he doesn't recognize him? The man's heart picks up speed. What are the chances of the two of them running into each other? What are the chances of it happening on his first night back in the city?

"Have you had time to look at the menus?"

"Pasta of the night for my wife and I, grilled cheese for my son," the man stumbles, gathering the menus and handing them to the waiter without eye contact. There is an unfamiliar shakiness in his voice.

The waiter takes the pile of menus from the man's hands. "Thank you sir, I'll get right on that," he leaves with a smile.

The man watches as he walks away, his thoughts drifting. There was one witness. One.

One man who never even reported him. How could he run into him here? How could he not recognize him? How could any of this be happening?

The night moves at a snail's pace. The man doesn't speak but his wife and son manage to entertain themselves with talk of schoolwork and weather. Every time the waiter stops at their table to check in the man's heart stops, the whole room freezes, and he waits for the realization to dawn in his eyes, but it never happens.

Eventually, the man snaps. Everything around him becomes too loud to think and his eyes refuse to focus on anything for more than three seconds. If he didn't know any better, he would think he'd been drugged.

"I'm going to the washroom," the man tells his wife without looking away from the waiter, who is currently speaking with a family on the other side of the restaurant. He then stands and strides towards the brightly lit exit sign, leading him into the alley behind the restaurant.

The night air is cool, nipping at his skin as he paces back and forth, desperately trying to catch his composure. If the waiter truly doesn't recognize him he isn't doing himself any favours with this suspicious behaviour. He just needs to calm down. Calm down and go back in there and-

The man's thoughts are cut off by the sudden bang of a door slamming shut behind him.

The man turns to see the smirking face of the waiter, standing eerily in the moonlight. "You?" The man sounds confused, although he knows very well why he has been followed.

"Yeah? Surprised to see me taking out the trash? I promise I'll wash my hands before bringing you your dessert," the waiter laughs, a bag of garbage in his hand.

"No," the man forces a smile, "I suppose not."

"I, on the other hand, have good reason to be wondering the same thing," the waiter stares at the man expectantly.

"Oh, I just needed some fresh air," the man looks away quickly, never letting his eyes rest in one place for too long. His heart picks up pace.

"Huh, seems a bit odd, are you not having a good night with your family?" The waiter continues to press him.

"No," the man snaps, suddenly defensive, "I'm having a lovely night, I suppose it's just stuffy in there."

"Right," the waiter seems unconvinced.

The tension between the two begins to build, the man averting his eyes for fear of being recognized and the waiter simply staring, garbage bag still in hand.

"Well, I suppose I should be getting back," the man begins, attempting to push past the waiter.

"Are you sure you're alright?" The waiter asks with a suspicious sort of smile. "You seem a bit uneasy." The man looks up at the waiter, examining his expression: knowing eyes and a sly smile.

It is as he'd worried it would be. "You remember me."

"Oh, did I give it away?" His voice turns from friendly to sinister in an instant.

"Why didn't you report me?" The man asks, desperately trying to hold onto his calm demeanour.

"I think you know the answer to that question."

The man's stomach sinks. This waiter has been waiting for him.

"How did you know him?"

"Who?" The waiter asks, playing dumb.

"You know who."

"I want to hear you say it."

The world around them seems to freeze. Both men, equally terrified, are stuck in this singular moment of high tension. Each of them watching the other, afraid to move, afraid to speak, until the man finally opens his mouth.

"The man I killed," he whispers, barely able to get the words out. It was such a stupid mistake, just some drunken argument behind a bar. A stupid drunken mistake that is about to take everything from him for the second time.

The waiter stares at him, anger boiling up in his stomach. He has waited years for this moment and now that it has finally arrived he doesn't know what to say. He stayed in this place knowing the man would return, hoping the man would return, waiting to get his revenge. Finally, he takes a deep breath and pushes the words over the lump in his throat.

"He was my brother."

The man's eyes snap up from his feet just in time to see the waiter lunge at him with a large kitchen knife. He freezes, pain spreading outward from a singular spot on the left side of his stomach. His gaze floats to meet the waiter's, they almost look sad.

"I'm sorry," the waiter whispers, the slightest bit of remorse in his eyes.

A gasp follows.

A thud.

The clang of the knife falling to the ground.

The waiter steps back, examining his hands. They're perfectly clean but they don't feel like it. At least he is finally free. At least he can finally move on. He takes one last look at his brother's murderer and returns indoors.

Inside, the usual chatter of the restaurant seems louder somehow. He walks by his guests without giving them a second glance, completely ignoring the empty glasses raised towards him and shouts of his name. He has the booth in sight now, the woman and child still innocently enjoying their meals.

"How is everything tasting?" He asks, drawing their attention away from their plates. "Oh, it's all quite lovely, thank you," it is the first time he has heard the woman speak all night.

"Wonderful, is there anything else I can do to improve your evening?" He offers them a wide smile. "Well, I suppose you could give it to us for free," the woman chuckles to herself. "Done."

"Pardon me?" She stares at him, confusion in her eyes. "It's on the house," he grins, "enjoy the rest of your night."

Then, without another word, the waiter turns and walks to the kitchen where he pulls off his apron and drops it on the counter, leaving it behind along with the rest of his life in the city. This time, it's his turn to hide.

Honourable Mentions

Congratulations to all of the writers whose works have been recognized with an Honourable Mention. We hope that you will continue to write and contribute to the Power of the Pen.

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Age 12 Poetry | Corinna Kieft, <i>Sickness and Health</i> Matthew Van Raalte, <i>The Golden Touch</i> |
| Age 12 Short Story | Ruth Ann Bos, <i>A Better Future</i> Carrie Malkin, <i>Good Mourning</i> Lily-Mae Peters, <i>Among the Ashes</i> Evan Thackeray, <i>Hijacked</i> |
| Age 13 Poetry | None |
| Age 13 Short Story | Raymond Chen, <i>Fearless</i> Clara Rakovac, <i>Missing Constance</i> Kristen Van Kampen, <i>The Princess and the Unicorn</i> Hannah Whetstone, <i>The Unforgettable Journey</i> Kaitlin Wiersma, <i>The Message for Fitzgibbon</i> |
| Age 14 Poetry | None |
| Age 14 Short Story | Maeve Jenkinson, <i>Re-emergence</i> Ramona Ribaud-Begin, <i>Endangered Species</i> |
| Age 15 Poetry | Sawyer Berkelaar, <i>The Glurkin is Lurkin</i> Meaghan Flokstra, <i>Youth</i> |
| Age 15 Short Story | Lian Attily, <i>Sham</i> Alexa Kouroukis, <i>The Dream Jumper</i> Katie Petkau, <i>Heroine of 1812</i> |
| Age 16 Poetry | Sarah Derikx, <i>Words</i> Kaylie Mitchell, <i>Perdoname Pania</i> |
| Age 16 Short Story | Averi Augier, <i>She Was a Dancer</i> Sarah Derikx, <i>My Part</i> Elizabeth Page, <i>Sometimes</i> |
| Age 17 Poetry | Juan Carlos Ramirez, <i>Schizophrenia</i> Srinidhi Shaw, <i>Sleep</i> Miranda Stirling, <i>Shallow as My Surface, Deep as My Entirety</i> |

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Age 17 Short Story | Sylvia Dobosz, <i>A Reluctant Dove</i> Stefenie Krezevic, <i>The Magic of the Moon</i> |
| Age 18 Poetry | None |
| Age 18 Short Story | Hailey MacLeod, <i>Blurred Lines</i> |

Judges

Sincerest thanks to our judges, who are tasked with the difficult job of selecting a first and second place winner for each category from so many wonderful submissions.

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Age 12 Poetry | Aimee Reid |
| Age 12 Short Story | Gisela Sherman |
| Age 13 Poetry | Charles Meanwell |
| Ages 13 Short Story | Joanne Levy |
| Age 14 Poetry | Tom Shea |
| Age 14 Short Story | Molly Hayes |
| Age 15 Poetry | Ellen Jaffe |
| Age 15 Short Story | Chris Brun |
| Age 16 Poetry | Jeff Seffinga |
| Age 16 Short Story | Susan Evans Shaw |
| Age 17 Poetry | Paddy Chitty |
| Age 17 Short Story | Tor Lukasik-Foss |
| Age 18 Poetry | Mike Alger |
| Age 18 Short Story | Bettina Von Kampen |

Hamilton Association for the Advancement of Literature, Science and Art



2016 Winners

Maitland Banting Silver Quill Award

Nicola Lawford

A Detailed Account of a Girl Who Loved a Boy, Among Other Things

Honourable Mentions:

Hannah T. Rosales, *Toolboxes and Telephones*

Julie Shadd, *An Acadian Tale*

The Hamilton Association Young Poet's Award – Co-Winners

Maeve Jenkinson

Recording

Rachel Turner

A poem for no one who wants to read it.

Hamilton Association

The Young Poet's Award and Maitland Banting Silver Quill Award are presented by The Hamilton Association for the Advancement of Literature, Science and Art (HAALSA), which is pleased to be a contributor to The Power of the Pen competition. The Hamilton Association is a non-profit, volunteer-run group that was founded in 1857 to encourage the spread of new knowledge to the whole community. It has presented an annual series of free community lectures, almost without interruption, since that time. As well, it has advocated for access to continued learning through the establishment of community institutions like the public library, university, art gallery and botanical gardens.

Maitland Banting Silver Quill Award

Hamilton Association judges view anonymous submissions limited to the Power of the Pen first- and second-place finishers in each of its seven age categories. A certificate and monetary award of up to \$250 comprise the Maitland Banting Silver Quill Award, which is presented to one young writer and, in rare circumstances, split at the judges' discretion. This special award recognizes clarity of thought expressed through superior use of language. Because Silver Quill judges consider this other aspect of creativity, entrants have an equal chance of winning regardless of age or placement.

A local prize for short fiction by a teenager was first presented in 1982 as The Silver Quill Award to celebrate the Hamilton Association's 125th anniversary. In 1997 HAALSA joined the Power of the Pen competition organized by the Hamilton Public Library. The Association renamed its award in 2000 to honour the late Maitland Banting who helped develop and administered it for many years.

Thank you to this year's Silver Quill Award judges: poet Chris Pannell and author Susan Evans Shaw.

Hamilton Association Young Poet's Award

The Hamilton Association Young Poet's Award consists of a certificate and monetary award of up to \$250 for one or occasionally more poems selected at the judges' discretion from among first and second place entries in the Power of the Pen competition for excellence in poetic expression.

We would like to thank this year's judges: poets Soraya Erian and Eleanore Kosydar for their sincere efforts in making what are always difficult decisions.

Congratulations to all the winners on their creativity, enthusiasm, and the effort they made to put their ideas into words.



Power of the Pen 2017

Call for submissions: March 27, 2017

Deadline for submissions: September 30, 2017

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