



LAKEFIELD
LITERARY *Festival*

2000

YOUNG WRITERS CONTEST
WINNERS

2000 Senior Fiction Winner

Unattainable

by Jenny Armstrong

Grade 12 – Norwood District High School

“Jump,” you said, and I didn’t even take the time to ask you “How high?” Instead, the second the thought crossed your mind and the word was softly kissed across your silky red lips, I jumped.

But I knew that just jumping would never be enough for you. It would never be enough of a gesture to show how much I love you. So instead, I jumped into the air. Then I flew high into the heavens, piercing through the soft white clouds that looked like dark ships sailing across the sea in the cool night air. Higher and higher I went until the Earth was far away, and the moon looked like a closer place to call home. There, I caught you the most beautiful cascading star I could find.

I held the star close, wrapping myself around it so that it would not fall and break. Then I carefully tumbled back toward the Earth below. Soon the star and I crashed back down to the hard earth. My back was instantaneously bruised, my clothes were ripped and covered in dirt, my legs bled, and my arm was seemingly broken, but I cradled and protected the star from being hurt in the fall. I brushed freshly fallen tears out of my eyes and winced in pain; my whole body ached and begged me to stay still, but my mind screamed, “*Go on! Get up! He’s waiting for you!*” And so I did. After three failed attempts, my legs finally followed my commands and allowed me to stand up. I picked up the star in my left arm and hugged it close as I slowly hobbled away.

I then bought a piece of velvet. Only the softest velvet in the darkest hue of blue would do, for it had to look like a piece of a dark night’s sky that had been stolen with the star. I found it and carefully wrapped the star up tight until all of its glory was sealed from sight. Next, I gently kissed the velvet, sealing my gift with all the powers of my love.

I went to your house, placed the bundle upon your pillow, and called out your name. You did not seem happy to be disturbed and appeared even more disgusted at the sight of me. But I just smiled, swept the stray hairs out of my eyes, leaving behind a trail of dust on my face, and pointed toward your bed. You gave me one more look of appalled confusion, then recovered, and walked gracefully to the bedside. I admired the ease with which you moved, and thought everything was worth it, if, through my gift to you, I could bring the finest thread of happiness into your life.

My eyes filled with the excitement of a child opening the biggest gift underneath the Christmas tree, as I watched you reach for the velvet, then slowly peel it back. Layer by layer, my gift was slowly revealed: a star in all its splendid beauty, stolen from the night and given to you with all my love.

As you finished unwrapping my gift, my eyes sparkled more. You looked at the star for what seemed like eternity, but I could not see your face to read your expression. Finally, you turned to

me. Your eyes were empty, devoid of love, and unimpressed by the sheer beauty I had given you. Not even the smallest smile tugged at the corners of your mouth, and not even the slightest inkling of love entered your eyes. Instead with a bored yawn, your response to me was, “Is this all? What a waste of my time.”

With those words, my heart, which had been so full of hope, plummeted like the star had, but with nothing there to protect it from the fall, shattered like a shell tossed at a rocky shoreline in all of the water’s rage. The excitement fled from my eyes and was quickly replaced by all the pain I felt. Desperately, I blinked back the tears that were so determined to escape, but to no avail. They descended down my cheeks like rushing rivers, carrying away with them trails of dirt and blood. All I could do was stare and cry.

What a pitiful sight I must have been. You looked at me as if I were crazy, then swept the star and its velvet encloakment into the trash. There, it too shattered like my heart. Then you walked away...

It was only then that I realized. Maybe I should have asked you, “How high...?”

2000 Junior Fiction Winner

The War of Sciana

by Kyle Bell

Grade 9 – Adam Scott Collegiate Vocational Institute

“Why must you always question my authority, Scroll? I hope you enjoy whippings because that is what you shall receive if you continue to concern yourself with my motives. We will search for the dagger as planned, guarded or not. We will need its powers if we are to defeat the wretched elves and take back our land. For six years we have fought for the land of Sciana, which is rightfully ours. The dwarf gods must look upon us in pity as we hide and run in our own land.”

“I agree,” said a dwarf named Keltsar. “It is time we brought honour back to our people.”

“Into the cave,” yelled a dwarf named Fenn.

The small party proceeded onwards into the supposed lying place of the dagger of Tiemolk. The dwarves had been searching for its whereabouts for some time. Perhaps now, they had finally found it.

The leader, Jorb, was the first to enter the cave and was immediately overcome by a powerful stench. Scroll entered and was about to open his mouth when he was silenced by a fierce glare from Jorb, who then abruptly turned away.

“Spread out,” Jorb commanded. “Keltsar, you and Fenn take the left passage, Scroll and Wick take the middle, and I shall take the right.”

Keltsar and Fenn came to a dead end and had to turn back. They then started down the middle tunnel, following Scroll and Wick. After walking for a while, they heard screams ahead and rushed forward to see what was wrong. They turned around a bend and right there, straight in front of them, lay the most hideous creature they had ever seen.

“It can’t be,” stammered Fenn. “The trok are but a myth.”

The creature had Scroll’s leg encased in its jaws, and he was flailing wildly to escape its grasp. Keltsar and Fenn joined in Wick’s effort to harm the ugly creature, but their swords were as useless as toothpicks against the trok’s scaly hide. It swatted them away effortlessly, as though they were mere flies, and continued making a meal of Scroll.

Suddenly, from behind, came a screeching battle cry as Jorb ran full force towards the trok. Then came an ear-piercing sound the dwarves would never forget. The trok let out a blood-curdling scream as it struggled furiously against the amount of pain that now engulfed it. With a

last desperate gasp, the creature fell motionless to the ground. Jorb pulled away and turned to the other dwarves.

“Men, we have our dagger.”

* * *

Far off in the land of Enquist, the elves plotted ways to secure the land of Sciana. Their king, Aedan, stepped forth, overlooking their plans for what could be the most important battle yet and their best chance to banish the dwarves forever.

“What is this?” he exclaimed to Kale, his leader-in-command. “Why would you have such a number of us fight on the ground, where we are at a disadvantage to the dwarves with their battle-axes? Our strength lies in our archers and our skills with our bows and arrows, not on the ground in hand-to-hand combat.”

“But m’lord,” stammered Kale, “we have the power of our sword, Rivenguard; surely it shall lead our warriors to victory.”

“In this we shall take no chances, Kale. Set up plans for our archers to be ready in the treetops by my orders.”

“Yes m’lord.” The elf commander quickly left the room.

Aedan turned to his queen, Lilanthe. “This must be the last, my wife, for I don’t know how much more I can endure. So many have been lost in our battles for this piece of land. I do not wish to lose many more of my brethren.”

* * *

Two weeks later, as the sun rose brightly above the horizon, the armies marched forth to meet each other. The dwarves strode forth in their shining battle armour, battle-axes glinting in their hands. Their leader, Jorb, carried the great dagger; its power could be felt resonating through the earth.

The elves came forth from the other side of the forest. Many were hidden in their camouflage-green armour. Their magical sword, like the dagger, vibrated with power.

With war racing through the minds of both elves and dwarves, there came a great flash in the sky above them. They all looked upwards in astonishment, for it looked as though the heavens were opening up. Then, unexpectedly, two images drifted from the sky and set themselves between the armies. The elves and dwarves gaped in awe. For there, standing in between them, were both their gods.

In unison both the images roared, “End this. The land is to be shared amongst you, not fought for with bloodshed. See to it that things change, else you both shall suffer greatly.”

Then as abruptly as the images had appeared, they were gone. From that day on many changes were made. Peace was at hand. War was at its end.

2000 Senior Nonfiction Winner

It's a Wonderful McLife

by Kirk Hendsbee

OAC – Lakefield District Secondary School

The day is Sunday, the Lord's day, but who has time for salvation these days? Instead, I stand in a line, having taken my designated spot after passing the destitute hordes of screaming children and semi-conscious parents. Waiting to make my selection, I feel as though I've been sucked into a well-lit scene from George Orwell's *1984*, fully equipped with several slack-jawed and hazy-eyed brainwashees. In reality, though, it's only the foyer of a generic McDonald's restaurant. After a few minutes the line shuffles me to the front where I have the joy of speaking to "John," my personal server, whose blank stare remains throughout our little discussion, during which I order a Big Mac with fries. I imagine that this scene is repeated many times every day in fast-food restaurants from Hong Kong to Berlin, and as globalization continues to connect countries to the "Global Village" at a breakneck speed, the number of customers at McDonald's increases. It's a documented fact: a country's level of development can be measured by, among other things, the number of McDonald's restaurants per square mile. Whether that's good or bad, it can't be denied that fast food has become a way of life that encompasses more than just what we eat. The fast-food way of life has become a revolution that's going to affect what we do today and what our children and grandchildren do tomorrow.

Fast food has become a symbol and metaphor of our times, a time when pre-packaged assembly-line meals are flung off the teenage-run conveyer belt as fast as they can be crammed down the throats of the harnessed masses of corporate vice-presidents, junior vice-presidents, and executive junior vice-presidents. Fast food has become a symbol for the twenty-four-hour-a-day workaholic rat race where parents work desperately hard just to scrape together a decent life for their kids, who, in the end, are the most profoundly affected by this fast-food phenomenon.

Kids are growing up independently in this new world-on-speed, free from parental guidelines and supervision, but somehow it's still a shock to everyone when they decide to start offing each other at random. Why are we surprised? Look at the environment these kids are raised in: quasi-sterile pastel-painted restaurants where they nurse a Coca-Cola quietly because mommy and daddy have headaches. Talk about repressed emotions! These kids are nearly quivering with unreleased rage by the time they're fifteen. So should we shut down all of the fast-food joints from Mexico City to Whitehorse in order to remedy this horrible conundrum? Well, that's assuming McDonald's and friends are to blame for this fiasco, which they're not. Sure, they're despicable, but fast-food joints and the lifestyle they represent aren't the perpetrators in this tragedy; they're simply the indicators. What they're indicating is that we've become a world of cellular parents and mobile kids, where Mom cut the cord long before the day she had to be manhandled from the boardroom into an unscheduled childbirth. In the end, technology hasn't improved our lives; it's

created a world where the office, and hence the work located within it, can be carried around. This is the world in which the future generation will toil.

It is the future that's going to bear the brunt of the fast-food life. Now that 1999 is over and we've parachuted into the magical twenty-first century, don't expect technology to slow down or become more docile. The millennium that we embraced with pretty fireworks and pop songs is just one really big prison filled with cubicles instead of bars. Now it's time for us to wake up and live McLife, even though it's much different than we were all expecting; there have been a few changes that we weren't briefed on, it seems. First, the nine-to-five workday has become a thing of the twentieth century, replaced by the much more efficient method of being surgically attached to a workstation twenty-four hours a day. Secondly, food will be served in continually smaller portions of time until a procedure can be devised to entirely eliminate this time-consuming period from the human daily schedule. Finally, it's time to stop dreaming. That Jetsonian apron-clad robot that looked after the house, made a double-egg-ham-and-toast breakfast, and raised the kids just isn't in the works. So grab a Poptart, lock the windows, plop the toddler in front of the boob tube, and hope with all your might that your kid doesn't grow up too desensitized to the world.

So what's going to be the result of all of the pagers, cellphones, laptops and high-speed internet connections? The outcome, in short, will be the development of the next generation of workers: a generation set to become zombie-like in personality and as machine-like in work ethic as the tools they so highly value. These workers will be the kids that grew up with Bert and Ernie as their father and the Blue Ranger as their mother. They'll eat and drink the workday while choking down high-protein beverages and selling stock in Taiwan. They'll be the kids who are too busy selling bonds in Mozambique to care that the ecosystem is collapsing around them. But most importantly, they'll be the pass-the-buck generation, a trick they're soon going to learn from their parents, who have used it extensively in the past few years. You see, just as fast food promotes fast living, it also promotes fast blaming, because who has the time to actually unplug for a second and analyze a problem? Certainly not anyone caught up in the fast-food life. However, that's no longer an obstacle, because in a world of endless corporate and political command chains, problems don't need to be fixed. Simply blame someone else and give the job of cleaning up the mess to an employee of lesser rank. It's the rinse, lather, repeat effect, where a solution is never found, but no one ever loses their job. That's the cost of globalization; it's hard to pin blame, so nobody really bothers.

You'd better be prepared for the global revolution, because it's coming to a home near you, and it's going to change the way you do just about everything. In twenty years the term "homemaker" will be taboo as double incomes are required to sustain the expected standard of living. The term "pacemaker" on the other hand, will be entered into common knowledge as booths to install the little device are placed in all of the major business sectors. As for the present, we're just entering the twilight of the twentieth century and the dawn of a new revolution, a revolution directly linked to the fast-food life. And as I sit at McDonald's, eating my Big Mac with fries and pondering that new horizon in the near distance, I take the time to wonder if the world has a choice with regard to the fast-food life. Can we simply choose to avoid it the way a boxer ducks to avoid a punch, or is it our evolutionary destiny? I certainly can't say, and even if I knew, I wouldn't have the time to explain it. But it's OK, because I'm sure there's someone else around here who can handle it...isn't there?

2000 Junior Nonfiction Winner

A Military Life or Just as Bad

by Lachlan Campbell-Verduyn

Grade 9 – St. Peter Catholic Secondary School

“Line up in alphabetical order, have your ID out, state your rank, mission, and military significance.” I haven’t joined the army, nor the navy, and I definitely haven’t signed up for boot camp. Worse, I belong to a large family of six people.

Don’t get me wrong. Each member of my family is nice, loving, and sweet... when they are by themselves. Together, though, they can be worse than the Mafia. They don’t use guns, knives, or baseball bats (not very well). But they have wit – or think they do. The teasing is unbearable. Every aspect of your physical appearance, your friends, your habits, and your schoolwork, which falls below their standards is dragged up and tossed back and forth. Mealtimes are the usual wrestling ground. Some days, we team up and pick on a certain person. At other meals, it’s everyone for himself. If you’re not quick, the others pounce on you. There are many traditional subjects that we use at almost every meal, and the collection of memorable comebacks grows and grows. Fortunately, we all know it’s in good fun. Our friends sometimes don’t. The newer visitors are not submitted to the bantering, but our closer friends are prey to it when they come over. Most of them have a good sense of humour; they don’t have much choice if they spend any time at our house. These friends can hold their own in the daily routine. Those who can’t take it as well are dropped from it, at least momentarily, out of respect. Personally, I enjoy the comradeship in these games even if they can be a bit trying on my patience.

At school, we escape the teasing, but not the large family status. Teachers and students alike remember older siblings, whether for good or for bad. If your elder was good, teachers might expect you to be smart, dedicated, and attentive. On the other hand, if your sibling didn’t have such an amazing reputation, teachers might automatically put you in their bad books, expecting you to follow in your sibling’s footsteps. Although this aspect of family life is not so enjoyable, having older siblings is a blessing in high school. To be known and to know older students enlarges your group of friends. It’s always nice to know older teenagers, with new ideas, new hobbies, and more often than not, new drivers’ licenses.

My family consists of two brothers, one older, the other younger than me, as well as a younger sister, my parents, and my grandparents; however, we must not forget my cat, as well as several other pets, and a rather impressive number of aunts, uncles, and cousins. Up to now, I have only mentioned my closest family members. I must not neglect the others who all play important roles in my life. Our pets, especially the cat, not only hold a sentimental place in our family, but often take a part of our teasing. We tease each other about our pet’s habits, and we tease the pets themselves. It seems that if no one in particular is the focus of our fun, we shift the game to the cat, who is unable to defend herself. She’s too fat, too grey, not playful enough, too young, too

lazy... the list goes on. She could be the world's only perfect cat, and my family would complain that she was too perfect. I think that cat-teasing is a family trait because my aunts and uncles don't enjoy cats much either. Yes, it's true. They also participate in this sport. Really, if only there were an Olympic teasing team, we would all have gold medals.

Truthfully, everyone in my family enjoys a large number of relatives. We have inside jokes and traditions; we laugh together and tease each other. Although we all pretend to detest the teasing, it does develop our wit and sense of humour. Everyone profits from our abundance of family members, even the cat who gets fed by six different people, each supposing the others have forgotten. No wonder she's subject to our teasing.

To be a professional teaser in this family, practice and training are necessary; it's war. "No talking in line, shoulders back, suck in that belly, stare straight ahead."

It's really not that bad, or is it?