



LAKEFIELD
LITERARY *Festival*

2012

YOUNG WRITERS CONTEST
WINNERS

2012 Senior Fiction Winner

Make Some Noise

by Emily Frost

Grade 11 – St. Peter Catholic Secondary School

There are many different kinds of quiet. There's the tense quiet right before the storm. There's the comfortable quiet shared between close friends. There's the angry quiet after a fight. There's even a happy quiet when someone is at peace and content.

And then there's the sad quiet when someone can't find the words to pretend that everything's okay and thus resorts to a grim silence. Some people can't distinguish between the different sorts of quiet, but I'm something of an expert. I'm a quiet person who comes from a quiet family in a quiet town, you see, and so I've had a lot of experience dealing with the different kinds of silence.

I can't see his face. He's turned away from the house, sitting by himself in the backyard on the deck swing that my dad put together years ago. All I can see are his tensed shoulders and his shaggy hair, which is in desperate need of a trim. Mom puts her hand on my shoulder, and I realize I've been staring out the kitchen window for a long time.

"Go to him," she urges softly, and so I do. I put on my rain boots because it's the middle of April and the ground is no more than glorified mud (a clinging remainder of the longest winter we've had in ages) and make my slow but steady way to the deck swing. I sit down beside him, and he shifts ever so slightly, just enough so we can both sit comfortably.

"Are you okay?" I ask, injecting as much warmth and compassion into my voice as possible.

He shrugs, tossing his shoulders in a way that makes me think of vulnerability. People try to hide their vulnerability until they can't. "I'm all right. You should go back inside. It's cold."

"Says the boy who left his coat inside," I tease lightly, and I'm rewarded with the barest hint of a smile. "Come on back inside. Mom made some tea. Plus we've got birthday cake for the birthday boy." I'm not sure what I thought I'd achieve with this thinly disguised bribe, but he barely reacts.

"I'm all right," he says again, refusing to be comforted. Sitting on the deck swing offers a breathtaking view of the half-frozen lake, with the long sloping yard leading down to the narrow pier that has survived against all odds over the years. This is where his gaze is focused, as direct and undeterred as the path of a bullet shot from a gun. "Really. You don't have to worry." He breaks off his gaze and elbows me in the side, smirking.

I smile. "You know I can't help but worry. I still remember what happened last year on your birthday when ..."

His smirk fades fast, and I backtrack immediately, but it's too late. He's retreated back inside himself, and I'm forced to finish my sentence mentally... *when she wasn't there and it was like a part of you had died with her.*

"Sorry," I mumble, not because I've done something grievously wrong, but because apologizing is just what you do when you misstep and you want to fix it. He takes a deep shuddering breath and turns to me with what only the most generous soul would call a smile.

"It's all right," he says. "It happened almost two years ago. I should be okay by now. I am okay. I'm all right. Don't worry about me."

"You're my best friend," I say, reaching to pat his hand. "I'll worry about you anyway. And no one expects you to be okay. Grief doesn't lessen over time. It just becomes more manageable."

"It was so stupid. A car accident. It just feels like something so completely avoidable. She died and it was completely avoidable, yet it happened and I still miss her every day. We had a tradition for my birthday, you know. She'd bake a cake and we'd go swimming, even though it's like fifty below freezing this time of year."

His voice is so sad, and so lost, and all I want to do is find the right compass to lead him back to safety. I feel that I'm always searching for the perfect words to make everything better. I know they exist, but I haven't found them yet. "I'm sorry. God, I'm sorry."

"Not your fault," he mumbles. "Just a stupid accident."

I stand up and pull him to his feet. He allows himself to be dragged upright with the utmost reluctance. "C'mon."

"What are you doing?"

"We're going swimming," I say, and give his hand a tug towards the lake. "C'mon. I'm sorry she's gone, but I'm here and the lake's here and it's your birthday and it'd be a shame to let this opportunity go to waste." He grins a little at my breathless speech, and without another word, we're running like children to the shore of the half-frozen lake. I'm soaked to the bone within seconds, and it's even colder than I had imagined. I sense that something is different. We're no longer hindered by reality, by the depressing facts that adults learn to live with. Something has changed, and I know that we've escaped from the jail of quiet and that finally he can begin to heal. It's not swimming so much as wading, but I can tell from the unadulterated happiness in his eyes that it counts. One of the most beautiful aspects of being a teenager is the complete freedom to select which emotions to focus on and which to ignore.

There are many different kinds of quiet. There's tense quiet and angry quiet and happy quiet and sad quiet. But there are many different kinds of noise, too. There's unhappy noise and sad noise and there's the best noise of all – the noise your best friend makes when you splash him with freezing cold water in the middle of April.

2012 Senior Fiction Runner-up

Bless You

by Megan Boothby

Grade 12 – Peterborough Collegiate Vocational School

Lizzie knew lots of things about mothers and how to handle them, but she didn't know how mine had gone blind. She said sometimes that there were things in the world so beautiful you could only see them once, and afterward you couldn't see anything else because just glimpsing that something was such an honour.

“What'd you think it was?” I used to ask.

Lizzie always shrugged.

“Only the Universe knows.”

When Lizzie babysat me the first time, I was with the Stone Lion in Promenara Park. Long before, Mum had arranged for her to take care of me every day after school. Straddling its broad cement back, I sat like a conqueror astride his carnivorous steed.

“It used to talk to me.”

I looked over, thinking she was a boy at first – there were workboots and a black sweater and floppy red hair – but then she glanced up, and I could tell the difference.

“The Stone Lion,” she insisted, motioning with a vague hand to the statue. “It's seen everything there is to see. When I was little, I'd sit right where you are now and imagine I was looking through its eyes at centuries. The Stone Lion's been around so long it's watched the stars switch places in the sky.”

I was pretty sure she was joshing me; a smile tugged at her lips. But she wasn't wearing any make-up, just like Mum, and that made me want to forgive her for fibbing.

For as long as I knew her, I always forgave her.

Lizzie and I lay in my backyard sometimes, looking at stars. I pointed out the Big Dipper, and she rolled over on her stomach to look at me.

“Danny, do you know what the first word I ever said was?”

“What?”

“Bullshit.”

My mouth formed an O.

“No! That’s a *bad word!*”

“I know. But when I was a baby, it was my dad’s favourite phrase for something he couldn’t believe. My mum says it was the first thing he said when I was born and he held me. So it was the first word I knew too.”

“My first word was ROAR!” I launched myself at her, and we rolled giggling across the dewy lawn. When we stopped, she lay on her back with her feet against my hips, holding me up at the ends of her legs like an airplane.

“Now why would you have said that?” she whispered, her voice gone as quiet as Mum’s when she was praying.

“I was talking to the Stone Lion. My Grammy took me there to visit it as a baby.”

“I see.”

I didn’t like the way things felt right then, like somewhere else another world was dying, and it washed right across the galaxies into ours.

“What’re you thinking?” I said, wiggling my arms up and down like wings.

“Right now, from down here, you look like part of the night sky,” said Lizzie. I looked at her then, and I knew she wasn’t happy. She talked a lot about leaving and finding The Answer, which I thought might be like a really special cheat sheet for a test. I didn’t understand – if she wanted a perfect score so badly, why didn’t she just steal it from the teacher’s desk?

Lizzie stared up at me. “Ya know, Danny,” she said, her eyes shifting back and forth, “sometimes, when I’m lying awake on rainy nights next to my window, I imagine what my life would be like if I moved to a big city. You ever imagine that?”

I shook my head, still hanging in the air.

“I see myself as a slightly more lesbian-looking Audrey Hepburn sitting on the fire escape,” Lizzie continued, “strumming a guitar, eh? *Moon River.*”

I pondered this and decided I didn’t know what it meant.

“Why?”

“Because sometimes I feel…” Lizzie started, and I never heard the end.

Later I asked Mum what lesbian meant, to which she simply replied with her typical,

“Bless you.”

Mum blessed you whenever she wanted to clean your mouth out with the all-powerful soap of the Universe.

Some afternoons on the way home from the Park, Lizzie stopped at her house in the shadiest corner of Willow Court. We played a familiar game called “The Quietest Mouse,” where we saw how silent I could be at the foot of her driveway.

“You can’t come in, Danny,” she always said, dead serious, and I waited for her.

And sometimes she brought her guitar out and sang for me.

“Lizzie?” I asked once when she was finished. “Did you mean what you said, a long time ago, about the Stone Lion seeing the stars move? Can they move? My Grammy said they were the one thing that would never change.”

She shrugged.

“Why? Do you find that disturbing?”

I frowned, and Lizzie laughed, like a whisper underneath all the night’s other sounds.

“Don’t worry, Danny. I don’t know anything.”

That night was the last time I ever saw her. Before she left, she kissed my cheek and whispered,

“Stone eyes see more than our eyes, and I don’t think there’s much more, you know, than stars and Stone Lions,” and then Mum said I’d stopped needing a babysitter, and Lizzie vanished like dew rising up into misty shafts of sunlight – evaporated.

She wrote me a letter once, a year ago, and as I read it, the mountains outside turned their wide white eyes away until I felt like the centre of a movie screen that was slowly zooming out.

It was you, she wrote. You were too beautiful.

There was something there, something ever so close to me, like a shadow I couldn’t quite glimpse. And as I wondered – I’d never know for sure – it crept inside me. Something about blindness and leaving and stone, about seeing and staying and infinite eyes that had watched the stars grow old and die and move on to broader fields and brighter pastures.

“Bless you,” I said to my window, but the sky was clouded and silent.

2012 Junior Fiction Winner

Slipping Under

by Mackenzie Green

Grade 9 – Peterborough Collegiate Vocational School

Underwater, it isn't blue. This is the last thing I notice before I realize I can't breathe. I lash out with my arms, slicing through the brown haze that lingers in front of my eyes. Tiny white bubbles, like the ones in a glass of Coke, burst against my cheeks. I try to swim again. The sky hovers far above me, obscured by waves of impenetrable glass that are pulled and tossed by the wind. A scream crawls up my throat, stopping behind my teeth as it meets freezing water. The place I've been avoiding for my entire life is consuming me, tugging me downwards. Weeds ensnare my feet, slippery tendrils weaving around my legs. How did I get here? Where is *here*, besides being the place I'm going to die? I don't remember.

One thing surfaces in my mind. I remember our tenth grade science class and my best friend Cassidy's innate tendency to be helpful. I'd always admired that about her.

"Tori Flynn, how long does it take for someone to drown?" the teacher asks.

"Uhh..." I glance over at Cassidy and she automatically swivels her head to look at me. We've been best friends for so long that whenever one of us falters, the other is there to step in.

"Depends," she mouths at me. Her lips stretch into a smile.

"It depends. Are they panicking?" I say, shifting my eyes back up to the teacher. Do they know in the back of their mind that it doesn't matter what they do, that they're going to die anyway?

I push with my arms and kick my legs. This time I move upward. My head breaks through the surface long enough for me to gasp a breath. The air sears my throat, and then the waves close over my head and I go back under.

It is the summer Cassidy chops off her long, blond hair and dyes it black. She stops borrowing my pink sweater and wears dark clothes when we go out. As we walk towards the nearest pizza place, I wonder when our friendship began. It must have been sometime between her fifth-grade boyfriend breaking up with her and my parents getting a divorce.

"What were you doing with Riley McMichael yesterday?" Cassidy stops walking and looks at me, her dull grey eyes like circles of concrete. Her tone is accusatory.

"Nothing," I tell her. She laughs, but it's too high-pitched.

"Tori, don't lie to me. I saw you with him at Francesco's Café." Her voice is still playful, but something is hidden beneath it.

“We were just having lunch.” I frown; it is too late to fend off her suspicion. “I was helping him with his English homework.” It is the truth; it wasn’t a date. I wish it was, but it truly wasn’t.

“Right...” Her voice trails off, spiked with skepticism. Resentment is pulling her face into a frown that I’ve started seeing a lot more of lately. “Tori, you’re supposed to be my friend. You know I’ve had a crush on Riley since eighth grade.” She turns and strides away from me, forgetting our lunch plans. Even though we are best friends, I still keep secrets from Cassidy, like the fact that I’ve loved Riley just as long as she has, and that my aversion to water is because I can’t swim.

Sharp pains tear through my lungs like slivers of glass. Tiny sparks flare in my peripheral vision. I try to reach the surface again, but my arms are weak, my joints cold and sore. My lips part and water floods into my mouth. It tastes like metal and rotting wood. My hair blindfolds me, sticking to my face as water pummels my body. Why do I have no recollection of falling into the water? I try to think back, but my mind is blank. I watch my hands yield to gravity and sink to my sides like dead leaves. The pressure overhead increases. Everything becomes black.

We are standing in Cromwell Park. I can’t recognize Cassidy anymore. The girl in front of me, with her pinched features and caustic stare, barely looks like the girl who used to be my best friend.

I will never forgive Cassidy Ingram for the acid words she has hurled at me during the past month. From the day I started dating Riley McMichael, she has slashed at our friendship until it has become irrevocably mangled.

“How could you do this to me?” she says. The anger and pain surge behind her eyes. “Are you trying to ruin my life? If only you’d just told me, if only you hadn’t lied and gone behind my back...”

“Would you hate me less?” I ask.

“Don’t talk to me!” she shouts.

The river behind us gushes past the rocks, chortling in dialogue with the jagged shore.

“Cass, I’m sorry.”

“No, you’re not! Just...just go to hell!” She thrusts out her hands and suddenly I am plummeting. My head cracks against the river’s edge as I try to grab at the mud-slick rocks, but she doesn’t notice. She is running away as I slip underwater.

“She’s coming to!” someone shouts. Water is trickling down the sides of my face. I am on solid ground again. I open my eyes, and the splatters of paint strewn on a canvas above me gradually take the shape of tall aspens and purple clouds. Streams of red and blue pulsate inside my head. A man in a paramedic’s uniform is crouched beside me.

“You’re very lucky someone spotted you,” he says. “What happened? Did you fall?”

Cassidy will be in trouble if I tell the paramedic what happened, even if she didn’t know I can’t swim. What would the old Cassidy do if she were in my position? The girl with the blond

hair that twisted down her back like dandelion chains. The girl whom I admired so much for her kindness.

“I don’t remember,” I whisper.

2012 Senior Nonfiction Winner

The Fear of Falling

by Shayla Larson

Grade 12 – Lakefield District Secondary School

I was a precocious child. I was the baby racoon who strayed out onto the weakest branch, never considering I could fall. The confidence of innocence coloured my world, and I was fascinated, intrigued, and bubbling with optimism. My parents taught me that I could achieve anything, and my family was the rock from which I dove into the waters of adventure. My cup ran over with the exuberance of life. I had everything.

I had two older brothers who served as my role models. It never occurred to me that my gender and size could limit me from achieving any of the goals I set in order to be just like them. I basked in the glorious sunshine of their approval. They played hockey and soccer, so I followed. I played both sports with fearless passion from the age of three. Uncompromising determination allowed me to gain the skills necessary to play AAA hockey on a boys' team as my skills convinced coaches to overlook my gender and size, and I was thrilled when people said I was as "sweet as pie, but tough as nails." Playing city-representative soccer in the summer reinforced my accomplishments as a female athlete.

Extremely competitive sports defined me. I was a freight train barrelling through life. Competition was my drug of choice, and I thrived on full throttle adrenaline. I set extremely high goals, considering my destination to be definitely determined. I would earn an NCAA hockey scholarship, play on the Canadian Women's Olympic hockey team, and make my family proud.

But then the branch broke. I did indeed fall.

Everything changed in a heartbeat. An innocent tobogganing accident turned into a seven-week stay at Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto, a total of fifteen surgeries, a lifetime of physiotherapy, and the crushed goals of a thirteen-year-old girl. With each operation, the IV that dripped into my veins slowly emptied my cup drop by drop. Time stopped for me as the rest of the world turned: games unattended, practices missed, friends playing at childish games as each drop drained my dreams.

Thirteen was the age when I truly lost my innocence. My injury forced me out of my perfect childhood dream and into the adult world of pain and suffering. I focused on taking my hospital stay day by day. Thinking about my future, which had previously brought happiness and joy, only caused insufferable pain and fear. Fear of the unknown. I wondered if I would ever be able to skate or even walk again. The emotional anguish was dulled by the drugs necessary to control the physical pain. In a contest between morphine, Valium, and OxyContin, the latter became my body's literal drug of choice.

Embarrassment compounded my loss of innocence as, along with the utter devastation of my injury, I endured a humiliating loss of privacy. I could no longer eat, sleep, dress, shower, or go to the bathroom by myself. In growing up, a child is rewarded for independence, whether that is walking or going to the bathroom. The sheer embarrassment of having my independence taken away from me once I had earned it was maddening.

The final stake in the heart of my innocence came later in my hospital stay when I was more alert. I learned that although my accident had caused a simple injury, medical mistakes had created the complications responsible for the permanent physical and emotional damage I now suffered. I boiled with rage toward the doctors who had, in their careless selfishness, allowed this to happen to someone so young. I had trusted those doctors during the worst time of my life and they had let me down. This realization tore at the fibres of my very being and forced me to swallow bitter contemplations of revenge. How could I trust anyone again? The most respected and trusted members of our society did not care enough, or pay enough attention to treat me, a thirteen-year-old girl, properly.

It took time, physical therapy, withdrawal from prescription drug addiction, and the love of my family, but eventually I was able to push my anger down. I began to contemplate the meaning behind my accident and I recognized it as a possible turning point in my life. I had come to a junction in the tracks and was forced to choose one of two paths. One path led to anger, resentment, and self-pity. The other led to effort, reinvention, and courage. I chose the light.

Rather than dwelling on what I had lost, I was determined to persevere in maximizing my potential by diverting my competitive drive from athletics to the pursuit of knowledge. Revenge was not going to give me back my perfect leg. I looked at my glass as being half full and was determined to fill it again. I became grateful for what I still had and recognized that I was still much more fortunate than many of the patients at Sick Kids Hospital and the countless children dying of starvation and disease around the world.

Having personally experienced the power medical care professionals can have on a life, I developed a curiosity toward the knowledge they possess. I have forced myself to see how doctors have helped me rather than focusing on the mistakes some of them made. I am now determined to become a doctor myself. I will use these hands and this love to help others. I will care enough. My new drugs of choice are the study of the human body and the ability someone can have to save another's life. I have promised myself that I will do everything in my power to help people in need.

This experience has been, and continues to be, my biggest challenge. I will continue to battle my injury for the rest of my life, but I will never give up. It has made me into a more compassionate, caring person. It has changed my goals completely. It has taught me that I cannot control what life gives me. Yet it is completely up to me what I do with what I am given. My life will be what I make of it. This experience has taught me never to be afraid to climb back up that tree, even though I know the branch could break.

2012 Junior Nonfiction Winner

The Première

by Tamsyn Riddle

Grade 10 – Kenner Collegiate Vocational Institute

It was a warm summer day, but you would have thought the Dark Mark was hovering over our houses, mocking any sign of hope or happiness and changing everything in an instant. It certainly would have sounded like it from the tone of the phone call between Mia and me. We cried and sulked for several hours and wound up concocting various scenarios that would change the tragic course of events our lives had suddenly taken.

“We could buy them off someone.”

“Who? Besides, that’s too embarrassing; we’d have to admit that we didn’t get them in time.”

“ebay, then.”

“Too unreliable.”

“Let’s call them and beg.”

“What if we just snuck in?”

And so it went; we became more and more desperate as the realization that it was hopeless gradually sank in, slowing the conversation to a stuttering halt and weighing down any hope that could have remained. There was no chance; it was over, and we were the ones to blame. I felt that my whole life had been leading up to that moment, and there it was – gone. I had never felt this much like I was receiving a Dementor’s kiss.

Now might be a good time for me to mention that the reason we were so gutted was that we were unable to get tickets to the Peterborough première of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*.

Yes, we were crying over movie tickets. And yes, we did consider breaking the law a few (or a dozen) times. It would have been worth it, but I digress.

We knew we were exaggerating, and we knew it shouldn’t have been such a huge catastrophe: it was only Peterborough after all, and only a movie.

But somehow that made it even worse. I tried to console myself, but it hit me like a Bludger: we were not true fans.

I felt like Harry when he realizes that Dumbledore was not who Harry thought he was all along: angry, confused, sad, and more than a little betrayed. But for us, unlike in the book, there was no happy ending, no surprise trip to King’s Cross station where everything suddenly makes sense. We simply were not going to see the première of the last Harry Potter movie.

No one else understood. My parents showed signs of concern and our friends acted disappointed, but all of them seemed to think we were overreacting when we said this was the biggest disappointment of our lives so far.

But was it? I thought about what had been leading up to this tragic change of plans. We had been reading and re-reading Harry Potter since we were six years old; our shared obsession was one of the reasons we became friends in the first place. We always played pretend, and although the games changed frequently, we often came back to ones about characters at wizard schools almost exactly like those in the Harry Potter series. As we got older, our appreciation for the books grew, leading to in-depth discussions that always ended in a blissful, satisfied sigh of “I just love Harry Potter so much.” We went to the Harry Potter exhibit at the Science Centre in Hogwarts robes (or as close as we could get) and plotted what we would do for the première of the last movie.

I found myself getting annoyed with everyone for not understanding. Couldn’t they see how important it had been to me, to us? Could they not even contemplate loving a world so much that you wanted to immerse yourself in it as fully as possible?

It wasn’t that unreasonable to be upset. So what if no one else understood? They just didn’t get it, and we didn’t have to pay attention to them. Besides, our love of Harry Potter had always just been between the two of us.

That was when it hit me, a wave of sudden emotion with an effect as staggering as the love potion on Ron in the fifth book.

Other people didn’t matter when it came to Harry Potter. So what if we would be watching the movie two days after it came out, surrounded by casual fans wearing normal clothes and not screaming at the opening theme song? The best part of being a fan of Harry Potter, at least for us, wasn’t about them.

It was about us, sitting beside each other, wands in hand and Hogwarts capes on, waiting for the movie to begin. It was about joy, affection, anticipation, but also fear, fingers clenched and gripping the seat’s armrests in heart-stopping terror and the wordless exchange when we decided that, no, we could not cover our eyes for this part. It was about laughing amicably at Harry as if he was someone we knew, the “Oh my god, he’s *such* a fool” that could turn to an impassioned defence in an instant if a non-fan dared to join in the criticism of our beloved main character. It was about sleepovers when we almost forgot that we knew what would happen next, taking breaks from reading to pass ideas back and forth before diving back into the action. It was about discussions where each sentence started with “but” or “and” because there was always more to say. It was about us seeing the Warner Brothers sign and hearing the theme song we knew better than Hermione knew the contents of her textbooks, and it was about us sharing a look of excitement so intense any Hogwarts student would have thought we were watching a Quidditch match, not a movie. It was about our love for something magical in every sense of the word and so much bigger than us. Ultimately, it was about me, Mia, and Harry.

So what did we do? We saw the movie as soon as we could, dressed up in Gryffindor robes, pretending it was the première. We bought Coke and acted like it was butterbeer, commenting on how many Muggles there were as we talked through the previews. And when we realized the movie was starting, you bet we exchanged a look of pure joy and screamed as loudly and excitedly as we would have if we were at the première. After all, we owed it to Harry.

The Mercury Girl: A Commentary on Beauty

by Vanessa Kraus

Grade 10 – St. Peter Catholic Secondary School

I spent five weeks of my science class studying optics. I must say, to my intense regret, that several things about the world are now less mysterious to me: I know the exact formula for moonlight sparkling on a lake, and which colours are really present in a rainbow. However, one of the most interesting things I learned was how pictures appear in mirrors. It's quite marvellous, really; light rays cross in front of reflective surfaces and, depending on what kind of mirror you have or where the light is coming from, you get larger or smaller images. There are two defined types of images: a virtual image, and more commonly, a real image. It's called a real image because light is actually arriving at the location of the object creating the image, in other words – you. So, your reflection in the mirror is nothing more than a fluctuation of light on a shiny surface. So why is it that every morning, and several times a day, we glance, gaze, stare, and sigh at what we see on that glass? Don't get me wrong: I doubt I would leave my house in the mornings without looking in the mirror at least once. However, we should concern ourselves less with how many times we look in the mirror and more with what we think we see.

If anyone looks at paintings from the Italian Renaissance, or most periods of French and German art, he or she can tell you right away that the women depicted in them are pale, elaborately dressed (or nude, but that's another essay altogether!) and well-fleshed. Simple enough: being well-rounded proved that you weren't starving; therefore, you had money. These were the beauties of only a few hundred years ago. If you showed any one of those women a picture of a young woman today, you can only imagine what her reaction would be. Nowadays, it appears that women classified as beautiful are in fact dangerously thin, golden-skinned, and usually wearing as little as possible. How quickly we change our attitudes! Because of the average lifestyle of most people today, this ideal is practically unattainable, since not many working-class citizens can afford the time or the money for personal trainers and trendy minimalist diets.

And let's consider this: how many of the willowy girls gracing magazine covers and film screens have done anything more strenuous than stand in front of a camera? How many do you imagine have worked thankless jobs with detestable hours or baked a batch of cookies with their children? This new ideal is not natural. Women are naturally curved: it's in the blueprints. Feminists forgive me, but we were designed to bear and raise children. Most "beautiful" girls don't even look as if they could lift a six-pound child, let alone carry one for nine months. My point is that we push for an outrageous goal, rather than admit to the beauty of a natural feminine form. The rates of deaths related to anorexia nervosa and bulimia are through the roof, most tragically among young women. It certainly makes sense: every advertisement they see, every movie they watch, every song they listen to, tells them only one thing: *Sorry honey, you're not good enough.*

Let's go back in time again to the reign of the Southern Belles, those glamorous Scarlett O'Haras and Amanda Wingfields. Picture those sparkling young debutantes entertaining gentleman callers on their porch swings, not solely by virtue of their beauty, but also through their refined wits and intelligent conversation (perhaps not educated, but at least intelligent!) Now, consider again the young women of today. These poor girls are judged solely on the basis of their appearance. So, those educated girls, the talented ones, who are not considered beautiful, are bypassed completely in favour of those who are. The world has come to a truly sad place when a pretty face and shapely form are valued over intellect or life skills.

Perhaps that is why more and more marriages today end in divorce: partnerships are no longer based on the compatibility of two individuals, the shared experiences and interests, but solely on the physical attractiveness of the two. It does not seem surprising that relationships such as these would "burn out" much more quickly, once the pair realizes they have nothing to talk about outside the bedroom. Hollywood does not seem to be helping to establish this point by showing countless escapades of the pretty young couple with a thousand faces married just out of high school, or getting pregnant in university, or any other circumstance that is not romantic or comedic in the least when faced by the real world. We must begin to understand again that marriage is not a game, or a movie, but a commitment that takes an intense amount of effort (from both sides) to maintain.

What is the solution to this endless race, this ridiculous pursuit of the perfect people hidden somewhere behind the glass? A fairly simple one: returning to the simple fact that what we see in the mirror is not real. One of my favourite quotes about reflections comes from Charlie Fletcher's children's book, *Silvertongue*. A character informs a young woman that "what we see in the mirror is a reflection of the past, because of the microsecond it takes for the light to reflect. So who we are in the mirror is only who we were." Therefore, we must simply accept the fact that how we think we appear is an illusion, that ideals are unrealistic, that it is not the imperfect girl on the other side of the mirror that is who we are, but the reflection we cannot see: the one ingrained in the eyes of our friends, our family, the ones we love. This is who we truly are. Many have said that actions speak louder than words; they also speak much louder than an illusion trapped behind glass, one with no voice at all.

2012 Senior Poetry Winner

In the Summer

The sun burns your skin into paper,
rough and thin, until your elbows crinkle, then
tall people with clothes
you don't understand spill dirt and ink on you.
They smell like smoke and burnt sugar,
like the factory down the street.

And driving lessons are hell because your feet
have a mind of their own;
but the sky is bright and
walking's easy,
and summer school sucks, but at night
you get drunk and contemplate the light pollution
until maybe, the sun rises.

Every next morning there's a perfect silence.
Rusted construction chains hang
from the bridge over the river, swaying
in the jackhammer dust. The air is cool
and tastes like someone else's teeth
in a clumsy first kiss.

The sun shines in the back of your throat
and burns your birch-white skin.

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by Wesley Collett-Taylor

Grade 12 – Peterborough Collegiate Vocational School

And Does the Whale Commune with God...

Dream of Newfoundland; try
to climb the swaying, rippling cliffs
behind the boxy house, bladderwort green,
and look over peeling stages, the crumbling ghosts
of fishermen crying to a broken sea.
There are slugs in the waist-high grass –
hands grip,
slip, stone and moss and rushing ears
catch the waves, like tired sighs.

The perch –
half safe, dangling limbs and thoughts
suspended
on the back of a sleeping dinosaur.
A town blinking in a curved below;
cod boats clink
and voices fade like aches into the blue
then lavender sky.

Two islands –
a flash of white between; a heave
of breath becomes drifting wind.
The whale, tail acknowledging the clouds,
who nod back, a lighthouse winks
and God, blowing with a soft strand of hair
across seeking eyes, found.

Atlantic tongue, salt season sacrifice
and the taste of night like a cool promise:
never go home.

* * * * *

By Megan Boothby

Grade 12 - Peterborough Collegiate Vocational School

The Suburbs

How long does it take to fall into the dark hole of yesterday?
Because I've spent centuries falling down this rabbit hole of forever-after
And the sun-drowned ink splotches composed of dice dares and candy shocks;
The contours of ambivalence lament locksmiths of light.
I've got a thousand promises of screaming my body through stoplights
And trick flights and mesmerizing nephrites,
Sundial magic show cotton-spun drones
And microphone matches and firefly satches,
Ziplocking memory into prepackaged bags of air,
Because my mind is stale and used and cooked
As of too long ago
And I need something fresh.

Earthbeats and heartquakes and soundbeams and moonscapes and
Lifedrums and earstyles and sunshifts and geardials.
A life of concocted compound words.

If a city cries, does it rain in the suburbs?

Because the battering of rainstorms in the Manhattan of my brain
Has sent my monsters into labyrinths of no-exit streets
And crescents and no throughways
And monotonous square patches of
Sterilized grass sheets.
Monsters crafting nightmares out of imprisonment
In time with my heartbeats.

If a city cries does it rain in the suburbs?

Because the thunderstorms are shocking my mind
Into shaking pulsing messes of sadness –

And I spend a lot of time shaking.

Shaking the hands of people I'll never meet again,
Spending hours shaking ink out of a pen,
Trying to write melodies between lines of algebra,
Poetry in the spaces of history,
Shaking my etch-a-sketch soul clean of impurity
Because today I need a clean slate.
Today is a new day.

And I shake when I see something worth crying about
And I shake when my body can twist but shouts blanks.

This week I've been shaking non-stop.
I've got violent contortions making my heart rate drop to levels
That even hospital patients would find violently silent.
Food turns to volcanic ash in my mouth,
Eruptions eliciting self-hate to grow in fertile ash-filled cavities
Between rows of teeth longing to bite the neck of sanity.
Anxiety paralyzes the outer edges of touch,
Shaking and contorting my nerves like I took bad ecstasy –
The kind that makes you scream for the days when you listened to your mother
And remembered that the monsters under the bed
Won't escape by draping a white bed sheet over your eyes;
The only way to kill werewolves is by using a silver bullet,
And the only way to chase the invisible monsters
From your bedroom or your nightmares
Is to shine a nightlight on them and search for saviours in shadows.

To remember that a bleeding neck can be bruised by love.

Gravemares and nightyards and glassmarks and scarshards
and concoctions of a thousand other misspelt words,
because when the city floods you'll see me screaming for a lifeboat,
the Tollund Man emerging,
shaking and starving,

lost in the labyrinth of the suburbs.

* * * * *

By Eli Campbell-Weiner

Grade 12 - Kenner Collegiate Vocational Institute

The Saint of Glass, or a Metaphor Confounded

Over coffee and rolls this morning,
we play the metaphor game again.
You ask me what I think I am.
I say I am a window trapped in a corner, plain and forever observing,
with people looking right through me.
My eyes see, but hands though I have, they do not touch,
and a mouth that does not open or speak.
You smile, and say that I am a stained-glass window,
both the benevolent saint and the dragon. You say
that I hold back the wind and rain;
they fall as nothing on my back, and I keep you safe.
Most of all, you say, the sun shines through me,
and the room lights up with my brilliant colours,
and you feel the warmth, and it is ten times more beautiful.
Damn you, I say, but you hear the smile in my voice.
Your turn. How about this, you say.
I am a stone saint in the corner of a cathedral...
a stone saint with edges made soft by pilgrim's hands, I say.
A St. Mark, or better yet, a Raphael with gentle hands, and a heart of gold
worth ten thousand stained-glass windows.

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By Vanessa Kraus

Grade 10 - St. Peter's Secondary School

The Race

(In memory of my uncle Terry Shawn Cordell Rogers, Niigaanzid Bizikii Anini)

*Set your rhythm, set your pace.
Winning is only part of the race.*
I stretched out my legs and wiggled my toes,
We all lined up in one long row.
It always gets silent at the starting line.
I hear her heartbeat, she hears mine.
The sound of that beat starts to fill my head,
And then I remember what my coach said:
*Set your rhythm, set your pace.
Winning is only part of the race.*
Judging glances from side to side,
Hair pulled back, shoes tightly tied.
Each runner is smart, she knows her own lane,
And my coach's words run through my head again.
*Set your rhythm, set your pace.
Winning is only part of the race.*
Our breathing falters, the gun is raised.
Our bodies are frozen, our eyes are glazed.
Then I melt into my gait, in a moment's time,
And I can't stop thinking of my coach's rhyme:
*Set your rhythm, set your pace.
Winning is only part of the race.*
Beneath my shoes, I feel acorns crack.
Wet mud or dry sand covers most of the track.
I round the next corner, and low and behold,
The steepest hill ever, standing proud and bold.
My shoulders get heavy, it's too hard, it's too high!
Yet in the back of my head I still hear that cry:
*Set your rhythm, set your pace!
Winning is only part of the race.*
My swift light footsteps turn into heavy stomps,
I maneuver as if I'm wading through a swamp.
Then finally, finally I reach its peak,
Painful but joyful tears roll down my cheek.
My chest is heavy, my lungs are sore,
Yet again that phrase comes around once more:
*Set your rhythm, set your pace!
Winning is only part of the race.*
As I descend down the hill, I breathe a huge sigh,

I sense in the air that my end is close by.
Although I cannot see very clear,
As bright as the day, I finally hear:
“When you set your rhythm, and you set your pace,
You’ll always win no matter what you place!”

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By Tonya-Leah Watts

Grade 9 - Peterborough Collegiate Vocational School