



LAKEFIELD  
LITERARY *Festival*

2020

YOUNG WRITERS CONTEST  
WINNERS

2020 Senior Fiction Winner

## Nametakers

*by Finley Taylor*

*Grade 11 – Adam Scott Collegiate Vocational Institute*

The author's feet beat hard and heavy against the earth of the forest floor. Behind him, the husk of what was once his house lies desolate, its walls trampled into the dry grass by his pursuers. His throat is raw, and his legs are beginning to feel molten. If he could take just a moment to rest under a tree, he would, but no. Though his pursuers move with the patient pace of the dead, they are coming from all sides, and even a few quick breaths taken in respite might end him.

Despite the rattling groans and whispers that come from around him, the author finds his mind drawn towards other sounds, a speech heard months ago. A speech, which, at least in his mind, was worse than the hollow chorus that surrounds him now.

*I'm sorry, David had said, but you're just not grabbing the audience. What sort of name is Joe Smith anyway? And Jane Deadly? Seriously? Naming a doomed character Jane Deadly isn't foreshadowing, it's just lousy writing...*

As he rounds a twisted birch tree, the author finds himself facing Johann Lukasewicz, arms outstretched in his funeral best. The author had written Johann as a kindly merchant, but there is no kindness in his hollow eyes now. The author, his reactions heightened by adrenaline, wrenches his body to the side and breaks Johann's grip. Leaving the apparition behind, he continues his panicked dash towards the town.

Names. They had always been his greatest weakness. His plotlines, twists, worldbuilding had been called exemplary. But, as critics, his publisher, and David had always said, all of that was secondary. It didn't matter how flowery the backdrop was. In the end, all his troubles boiled down to the simple fact that nobody could relate to a bland man named Joe Smith. Perhaps he could have turned it around, made them nuanced characters, but in truth even he found the names uninspired. He would struggle feebly for a while, weakly trying to stuff personalities into the insipid mannequins that occupied his tales, but eventually he was always forced to hand David a manuscript populated by soulless dullards.

The author thought he knew exhaustion, but he has never before felt as tired as he does now. He would call himself breathless if the woods were not filled with the empty lungs of his pursuers. He stumbles over a rock, and the shades behind him grow closer.

The author maintains that truth is stranger than fiction, and when forced to generate names that could drive a narrative, he turned to reality to populate his fantasy worlds. He'd considered copy-pasting lists of staff members from cafés, but he couldn't risk a lawsuit. And so he had turned to the one place where his subjects wouldn't complain.

The graveyard.

A thousand names, waiting to be used, made more vibrant than their bearers had been in life. He had travelled to lakeside cemeteries, funeral homes. He had even raided the crosses of the military memorials, taking names whose missing owners had long since been shredded into the mud of the Somme.

He'd felt guilty of course. He imagined bereaved family members would be rather distraught to see their loved ones turned into sorcerers and goblins. *I'm revitalizing, not bastardizing* he'd told himself. But now, as the forest grows thick with the groans of vengeful phantoms, he comes to realize he's robbed these dead of the only shred of identity they had left. And so they've come, all of them. When they'd first climbed the walls of his house, shattering its foundations and leaving it a ruin, he'd thought they'd moved as a unit. But as he'd fled he'd witnessed infighting, rotted bones and skulls broken in a grizzly contest. All of them wanted the same thing: his name, he suspected. If he could, he'd have given it to one of them, but as the parade of corpses so aptly demonstrated, names are tied inextricably to bodies even after the soul departs, and he suspects that he would not survive handing over such a prize.

Phillipa Saxon, the heroine of his story, streams around a tree to cut him off. In his story Saxon is an imperious woman, but the real Phillipa was cremated years ago, and now moves as a cloud of ash in the shifting form of a murderous hag. The soot of her form coalesces into claws, but he sidesteps her attack and continues to run, his mouth filled with dust.

They are almost upon him now. To his left is the waterlogged corpse of Lilliard, the orphan boy who leads Phillipa to the capital, and to his right is the embalmed body of Dalbridge, the scheming necromancer, stiffly dragging a toe-tag and morgue sheets behind him. He is glad, at least, that no soldiers have come, for as old as their weaponry may be, it might still serve to kill him from afar.

In the distance, the lights of the town glint. He highly doubts there is safety in numbers, but there he might find brief respite. Emerging from the treeline, the author takes a breath, then a step.

And finds his leg sunk to the knee in cloying mud.

*Marsh* is his first thought, but no. These woods are dry.

It is only when the decomposed hands of bloody mulch begin to pull him deeper that he recognizes the soldiers.

Bodies torn asunder by the war, they have become one with the mud, a vengeful slurry of soil and blood. He would scream, but already they surround him and force their way down his throat. There is a struggle, then silence.

The other pursuers momentarily pace about atop the swamp, but they recognize when their prey is beyond them and regretfully begin to stumble back to their graves. The author will be recovered someday, but by then he will not be the author. He will be a bog-man. An unclaimed body. As faceless and nameless as a soldier dead in the mud.

2020 Junior Fiction Winner

## Runner Up

*by Clementine MacLeod*

*Grade 9 – Adam Scott Collegiate Vocational Institute*

Simon stands at my shoulder, much closer than he normally would. For support, theoretically, but he really shouldn't still be here.

“Go to your line,” I tell him. Funny how though he's older, I'm the sensible one. Yet, somehow, I'm still inferior. He may be stupid, but he's a damn good runner.

My brother pats my shoulder a little too hard, his version of a hug. “Don't suck, okay?”

I smile, but it's just for show. *Not sucking* might not be possible. “Whatever,” I say, “Good luck.”

Simon just nods.

I check my watch as our line starts to move. The thin, athletic, better-than-me girls smile and bounce from foot to foot. The track is wide and somehow looks longer than the one back home, as if the expensive orange rubber has elongated the familiar 400 metres into something else entirely. “This'll be fun,” the girl to my left squeaks nervously. Her I recognise. She's from my district – short, super skinny, and, obviously, gorgeous. All that, and she's crazy fast.

“Don't be nervous,” I tell her, ignoring the anxiety bubbling beneath my ribcage.

She grins and, yeah, she's got perfect teeth. “Ugh, easy for you to say! You're literally *so* good.” Okay, so as nice as this sounds, it's total BS. First off, she's better. Not *we're always neck-and-neck-but-she-usually-wins* better, either. Like, I could run the greatest race of my life and not be good enough to feel the dirt off her shoes. *Dawn*, I realize, *that's her name*.

I grin back. Whatever, I'll bite. She's just trying to be nice. “No, seriously,” I assure her, “You're gonna kill it.”

She shakes her head and says something stupid about how bad she is. I'm so goddamn sick of impressive people complaining. I get it. She's here to win and anything else would be catastrophic failure. But it isn't like she'll *lose*. She's striving for perfection but the worst she'll get is third. Sure, I'm here to do well, but for me it's a pipe dream. Running every day and trying my absolute hardest will get me fourth and Dad will be proud. Kinda pathetic, when you think about it.

We get to the starting line and watch the guys set up. There are a few from my school and I shoot them an encouraging smile as the gun goes. They'll do fine, and if they don't, well, I don't really care. I'm not bitter or anything, but those guys have always been the ones whispering. Saying

I'm nowhere near as good as Simon or my sisters. They're right, obviously, but it sorta sucks to hear.

We're told to take our places and my usual pre-race thoughts flood my brain. I should just throw it, show everyone I suck as much as they think I do. It's not like I'll be any more embarrassed. Shaking my head, as if to physically rid myself of this mindset, I approach my mark.

Whatever, I'll do my best.

The gun goes and we're off. Dad's voice replays in my mind, *just choose one of those girls you think is so good and stick to her. Don't let her get away from you.* Dawn's a few feet away, pulling away from the pack with every stride. *Screw it*, I think, and I muster up the strength to match her pace.

Christ, there's no way I'm gonna keep this up. My motivation, though, is coming from the same part of my brain that keeps telling me I suck, and that means I can't slow down. I'll try my best. It's not enough, I know, but what else can I do?

Now, it isn't just Dawn I've gotta beat. Obviously, there's tons of others who are better than me. Better, fitter, thinner, richer (by the looks of their shoes), and they're gonna beat me just like they do every year. This doesn't make me wanna go slower. It should, obviously, but I've decided I've got something to prove. To Simon, to those guys in my grade, and to Dad. To myself too, I guess, but that isn't the point.

We loop back to the starting line. One lap in and I'm already screwed. I catch Dad's eye on the sidelines. He's nodding, eyes wide, and yelling something I can't hear. He wants me to try, but I'm starting to think even that won't be enough. *God, my lungs hurt.* I block out my thoughts and focus on Dawn's feet, matching pace. *Just breathe*, I repeat to myself, *breathe and run.*

Lap two and three fall away in a haze of pain and shallow breath. Dawn's pulled ahead quite a bit and my plans to stick to her have failed royally. Good news is that a few of the others have fallen back, too. Without meaning to be, I'm in second. *Second.* The word rolls around my brain as if jostled by my bouncing steps. I've never done this well before.

It's such an accomplishment that I almost don't realize I'm *gaining* on Dawn. Like, *gaining.* If I put in a good push, I could *win.* The thought alone pushes me further. But I'm so tired. My lungs throb and the muscles behind my knees are on the verge of giving out. At this point, I'm begging my body not to collapse. But she's *right there.*

Dad's voice cuts through the crowd and, like that, we've got 200 metres to go. I'm pulling a sprint out of some deep recess of my body and I'm getting closer. I can feel the vibrations from her shoes. I can *hear* her breath.

But there we are, 100 *freaking* metres from the finish, and Dawn starts sprinting. She's fast and light and there's no way I can conceivably do this. She crosses the finish line and, seconds later, so do I.

Second place.

Runner up.

Silver medal.

First loser.

But for me, Callie Henson, the not-thin, not-pretty, not-better than you, Untalented Henson Sister, it's a goddamn triumph!

## Throw Me an Apron

by Anna Harris

Grade 12 – Lakefield College School

Every December without fail, my family buckles down for a full day of Christmas baking. It's not your average cookie-and-pie-filled day of fun family bonding, but more so a factory operation with a single end goal: producing as many Dutch sausage rolls as four people can manage in a single day – *worstenbroodjes*. Although the pronunciation of these delicious meat-filled bread rolls is difficult for most Canadians, it is widely agreed by our taste testers that the end result is a delectable replacement for any snack or meal. At Christmas and New Year, the *worstenbroodjes* get distributed by the dozens to our friends and extended family, while any remaining go into our freezer to be enjoyed throughout the year. We're lucky if they last until Easter.

On the first day the whole family has off for Christmas break, my parents get up early to start the process. My dad prepares and kneads the dough so it can start rising, while my mom starts mixing the ingredients for the sausages and forming them. My brother and I stumble blearily downstairs as soon as we wake up, usually to be thrown aprons and told to commence the assembly line right away. My brother tends to be the last to emerge from his room. He rarely loses sleep for anything, and this day is no exception. Of course, this earns him never-ending scorn from me about how he affects our productivity with his absence, but I can never stay irritated for long when there's so much to be done.

A typical batch of *worstenbroodjes* requires quite a few steps: make the dough, knead it, and set it to rise somewhere warm. Then, divide it up and roll each piece into smooth, golf-ball-sized spheres and let them rise again. While this is happening, mix the meat and spices together. Form the mixture into small sausages, then cook them until they're medium rare. When the balls have risen, use a rolling pin to roll them into flat circles and place a sausage in each one. Fold the sausage up, like wrapping a gift in paper, and seal the edges with water. Dust the bottom of each formed *worstenbroodje* with flour, place them on a baking sheet, brush them with egg wash and then stab each one precisely three times with a fork for aeration. Put the tray in the oven, then repeat *ad infinitum*.

In this enterprise, my dad is the Dough Overlord, my mom is the Sausage Queen, my brother, dad and I are the Ball-forming Experts, my brother is the Chief Roller, I'm the Egg-wash and Fork Master, and my mother and I are the Package-forming/Assembly Specialists. Our recipe has been perfected over the years, passed down from my mother's Dutch grandparents and then given personal touches based on our family's preferences. The result? A perfect white bun that's golden and slightly crisp on the outside but soft and fluffy on the inside. Its flavour is intriguing, levels above bland grocery store bread, but subtle enough to flawlessly complement the juicy, mildly spicy sausage lying perfectly cooked on the inside. They're a bun and a sausage that would each be great on their own, but together they're sublime. As my mom would always say, "it's a party in your mouth." My brother in particular agrees with this statement and prides himself on being the

*worstenbroodje* taste-testing connoisseur. Naturally, this means he has to try every single batch and decide whether he likes the level of spice. Unfortunately for him, our parents are more fond of the heat, so he usually has to settle. And me? I'm a vegetarian, so I don't eat them.

I have never visited the Netherlands, but from what I've seen and been told, our *worstenbroodjes* aren't very similar to those made by other Dutch families. They aren't anything like the basic sausage rolls you can purchase at the store, either. The recipe and tradition are unique to our family, something special I look forward to making every year. It's an almost therapeutic day of muscle memory and familiarity in between the stresses of school and the chaos of Christmas, with the ultimate reward at the end: amazing food that provides a source of unity for all *worstenbroodjes* lovers. Not participating in this crucial consumption aspect of the tradition has been difficult.

*Worstenbroodjes* and I had a rocky start to our relationship. Although the process has always been a much-anticipated tradition, the product itself has produced mixed emotions over the years. As a young child, I didn't like the taste of red meat, so my parents started baking some risen dough balls without the sausage for me. We called them *Anna-broodjes*, meaning Anna-buns. As my taste buds became more refined, I grew to love the taste of *worstenbroodjes*, so it wasn't until I decided to be a vegetarian in high school that I realized I may have ruined my favourite holiday tradition for myself. I couldn't bear the thought of going back to eating plain baked dough without the sausage, but I couldn't justify going against my values unnecessarily.

As Christmas approached, I wondered if the magic of our *worstenbroodje* baking day would be lost for me. I've always been passionate about cooking and baking, but much of my motivation lies in the end product; I'm a sucker for gourmet. So last year, it was as much a surprise for me as for anyone that when production day came around, I rolled out of bed and stumbled blearily downstairs the moment I was woken up by the whirring KitchenAid mixer. Inhaling contentedly the smell of fresh dough, I eagerly grabbed the apron my mom threw me and joined the assembly line. Sometimes, I've realized, the process matters more than the product.

Of course, it helped that my dad and I came up with a vegetarian alternative that was just as tasty: stuffing the buns with curried mashed potatoes instead of sausage. Now we just need a name: how does *aardappelbroodjes* roll off the tongue?



## There Are No Right Answers in Improv

*by Izzy Lloyd*

*Grade 9 – Thomas A. Stewart Secondary School*

I'm standing on stage, pretending to dig up dinosaur bones with my fellow archeologist, when an offstage voice calls, "New action!" I put down my invisible shovel and begin reburying the bones, only to be interrupted seconds later with, "New action!" Before I know what I'm doing, I find myself squatting down, eating fistfuls of fossilized dinosaur remains while my scene partner watches in horror.

This is just one example of how an improv scene can go from reasonable to completely absurd in no time at all. Odd as that experience was, it is by far not the weirdest one I've witnessed.

I enjoy all forms of acting, but improvised theatre, or improv, is definitely my favourite. Unlike other forms of theatre, improv is almost completely unscripted and forces you to come up with new ideas on the fly. The answer someone gives you may be completely different from what you expected, but you still have to accept the offer and move on. In that way, improv is a metaphor for life: you never know what will happen next, but you take what you get and roll with it.

I believe that everyone should try improv at least once in their life. Many people will argue that they can't do it because they aren't creative enough, or they can't come up with ideas that quickly, but the thing that no one tells you is that you don't have to be *good* at improv to have a great time doing it! In improv, there is no such thing as a right or wrong answer – only the unpredictable and the unexpected.

The reason why I love improv so much is because it helps me get out of my comfort zone and take risks in a safe, supportive environment. Improv is all about surrendering yourself to the absurd, which is convenient when all your ideas sound crazy out loud. There's a sort of rush that comes with making a complete fool of yourself in front of others, and a feeling of comfort in watching them do the same.

I became interested in improv around the time I went to my first acting camp, led by Linda Kash. My memories of that experience are blurry, but certain aspects of it still stand out in my mind: we had to perform an original play (Easteropolis and the Grumpy Goons of Grumpville), which incorporated various pieces of music, including "Let It Go" from *Frozen*. At the time, I thought it was a hilarious work of genius, and I still do. It was completely ridiculous, but I loved being a part of it. Thanks to Linda Kash and her team of people who are willing to put up with children, I began my lifelong love of theatre, improv, and abstract humour.

I have never laughed harder than I have during improv classes. You would not believe the freaky nonsense teenagers can come up with, given the right prompt. It's been said that laughter

is the best medicine, and while it isn't a miracle cure, it can certainly help. For me, doing improv is like therapy. It always makes me smile, even if my week has been absolutely horrible, and I leave each class happier than when I walked in. Sometimes a little break from reality is all people need to make their day a thousand times better.

I struggle a lot when it comes to making up my mind, but it is much easier to do when I know there won't be any real repercussions, other than a possibly awkward scene. When faced with a decision, I tend to get very nervous and feel the need to analyze the pros and cons of every option before I make a choice. However, improvising forces me to make split-second decisions without over-analyzing my actions. Although I continue to find acting impulsively stressful, improv has made it much easier for me.

Improv has played a key role in shaping who I am today, and in helping me become a more confident, happy, and decisive person. In a society that puts so much emphasis on planning for the future, we need to remember the importance of experiencing life as it happens. At its core, that's what improv is all about: being in the moment. So get out there and make a fool of yourself, because life's more fun with a little spontaneity.

## Track 17



Photo Courtesy: 2019 Liv Brown

When I walk here, the tips of my shoes get caught in the divots of the walkway. Caught and stuck, at risk of falling if my other shoe finds its way into a gap as well. But, I'm free to stop, step back and right myself, free to turn around or move forward.

Free.

I can't know the faces of those whose names are stuck here like a sticky note on the surface of the fridge: name them now as an afterthought before the inevitable swell of time forces the hands of the present to forget. Do the children who play here know that they play on the only graves these people will ever know? Or, do the business men and women who walk to work pointedly look away from the track to avoid the heaviness emerging from the engravings.

The thin white paper tucked under a stone says his name was Peter and he was twelve. I avoid the stories of twelve-year-old boys because all they do is force me to confront a world where my own twelve-year-old brother could be ripped away. Here, in this place, there is a sting of missing potential and a hollowness that only comes from loss. It's taken almost a year to realize that the surge of emotion does not come from a place of anger, but from grief. Grief of unknown faces of unknown boys who merge into one long scream that seems to echo faintly at these places, or whisper in the Void.

Now deserving of a capital, it is this Void we are here to individually deepen and perhaps never fill.

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*By Liv Brown*

*Grade 12 - St. Peter Catholic Secondary School*

## Magic

The stars aren't like magic.  
They are magic.  
As you lay your head upon the grass  
And gaze up at the night sky,  
Hold your breath  
And close your eyes,  
Quietly whisper your wish among them.  
Later that night when the stars start to shine  
Brighter than they ever have before,  
The magic will mix with the wind  
And slowly but surely will make its way within you.  
Its essence will overcome and drown you.  
You'll have magic running through your veins,  
Your bones will be overgrown with moss and lungs filled with rainwater.  
You will become magic.  
Stars aren't like magic.  
My darling, they are magic.

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*By Thushika Thusiyanthan  
Grade 12 - Clarke High School*

## Final Dance

Once I had roots holding me up,  
My mind was a glorious storm of wonder.  
At the wind, I would dance,  
Colours would fly, songs would be painted against the canvas called the sky.  
Fear was buried deep in the ground, nestled where it could not be found.

And then I encounter a mighty beast:

Man.

He is vicious, his mind lost to greed and envy.  
Hate blooms where flowers once faced the sun.  
He sees only opportunity for his growth,  
Wanting flows through his veins, blocking colour and dance and song from his eyes.  
He craves.  
He desires.  
He wants,  
And he destroys.

His axe burns through me,  
Breaks me from my roots.  
My arms hit the ground, colour smears across the earth.  
The wind breathes across my face, and I let my leaves slip through my fingers.  
They wisp through the air,  
Creating what will be my final dance.

I am made into man's greed.  
Man's envy.  
I am pressed, cut, torn.  
I am nothing but what used to be.  
I am small, the decor of a pocket.  
I am passed on, and on, and on,  
Until I slip...

And suddenly the wind claims me.  
My worth grows until,  
I am not a number, but a colour once again.

And I do my final dance.

\* \* \* \* \*

*By Hailey Cavanagh*

*Grade 9 - St. Peter Catholic Secondary School*

## An Open Letter Explaining Why I Can't Stand Being Around You

You suffer from insanity  
Your thoughts are a calamity  
The downfall of humanity  
Will be because of you.  
And because of your laxity  
As well as your audacity  
And your lack of capacity  
There's nothing you can do.  
You overlook reality  
You are such a banality  
And your sense of morality  
Is hopelessly askew.  
I could go on eternally  
Instead I'll do the courtesy  
Of ending this respectfully,  
Another point of view.

\* \* \* \* \*

*By Izzy Lloyd*

*Grade 9 - Thomas A. Stewart Secondary School*