



2022  
Short Story  
Contest Journal



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All stories were presented to guest judge, author Jasmine Warga, in the same font and size and did not include any information about the author.



# The Tale of Cancerzilla

By Nala Winter Panozzo

4<sup>th</sup> Grade – 1<sup>st</sup> Place

This is the incredible tale of Cancerzilla. This terrifying creature is extremely tall and has orange scales along his back. Unfortunately, my sister Summer had to battle this monster. His powers are tough to beat. He uses his cell mutator to weaken his opponents and make them tired and sick. She was only nine years old when she embarked on this journey. The battle lasted three grueling years. Summer was given a list of items she needed to collect to successfully beat Cancerzilla. Along the way, Summer faced many different creatures and went through many obstacles. Who do you think will win, Summer or Cancerzilla?

With her backpack of supplies, Summer set off on her journey against Cancerzilla. Summer's first obstacle was on a rocky pathway. The only way to keep going was to pick left or right. She went with the pathway to the left where she came across a pit of fluffy and bubbly foam. Going very slow, she tight roped over the pit of foam. When Summer finished, she walked a couple of feet right into a crocodile's mouth. The only way out was to open his mouth and quickly dive-roll out. Finally, she got to a special purple potion. This was item one on the list to defeat Cancerzilla.

The second obstacle was going to be super hard. She had to go to this creepy looking castle. Terrified, she walked over a bridge. As she walked over it, she observed a yellow germ dragon. The germ dragon was trying to make her sick. She was so scared. She rustled through her backpack and found two things she thought could defeat the dragon. Summer debated between butterfly needles or medicine. She quickly decided on the medicine and threw it. Luckily, the medicine was enough and he was defeated. Defeating the Germ dragon set Summer free from the castle and she came across a door. When the door opened a Chemo Key was revealed. This was the second item on the list.

The last obstacle was a race against a chemo troll. This obstacle was one of the toughest. The chemo troll used a power to make all of her hair fall out. This made her feel really sad, but she was brave and kept going. Her bravery helped her win the race against the chemo troll. If she let her sadness overtake her, this would have allowed the chemo troll a head start. At the finish line, the last item appeared. It was a potion called Cancer Killer 2000. Summer was very happy to get the potion. It was a relief after all of this time to have the last item on the list.

At last, Summer can use the items she collected on her journey to defeat Cancerzilla. As she found the monster, she used her items one by one. The purple potion was used first. She backflipped high to sprinkle the purple potion on top of its head. This made Cancerzilla weak and it ran off into a locked room. This is where the Chemo key could be used to open the door. Cancerzilla ran out of the room. Summer could feel herself getting stronger and could see the monster getting smaller and weaker. She knew this was her chance to defeat it once and for all. She grabbed the last item out of her backpack, the Cancerkiller 2000. She threw it right along its orange scales. All of a sudden, he started to fade away and her hair began growing back. She jumped up and down while cheering "I did it"!

Wow that was a lot she went through. She is so brave and possesses a lot of Grit. My brother, Carter and I helped her along the way. Summer still looked like a beautiful super model even when she lost her hair. I love my sister and look up to her. I hope you liked the incredible Tale of Cancerzilla.

# Skiing at Cascade Mountain

by May Duyen Nguyen

4<sup>th</sup> Grade – 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

“We’re here!” I cried. Finally, I arrived at Cascade Mountain in Wisconsin. I was so excited to ski for the first time in my life! My heart overflowed with joy like rain drops from the sky as well as my mom, my dad, my little brother-Ethan. I put on ski outfits and ski accessories that made me look like an astronaut who walked on the moon. Let me tell you, the first time that I wore the ski boots, my feet felt like broken because of its weight dragging my two tiny legs down. I waddled like a penguin because the size of the ski was about half of my body. “March! March! Out I went into my first ever ski adventure!” I announced.

“Yay!” I shouted. I was super pumped that I almost burst into tears when I took my first step on the ice of the flat trail. As I looked up at the mountain view, many trails stretched their arms out into the white snow from the hills down-so beautiful! The snow glittered and shined. The sun’s warmth and brightness touched my face-felt so good yet so cold. The air filled with laughs that replenished my courage. At first, I struggled to push the ski poles because I didn’t get used to them yet. I already felt tired after couple of pushes but I kept pushing and pushing using all my strength against ski poles to help me slide on the snow. Eventually, I got better in no time and that was when my dad convinced us to try the Schoolmarm trail. Going up, I had to sit on a double chairlift that go around and scoop me up like a man scooping up ice cream. It was just plain hard. Anyway, once I got on the top, I felt like I was looking down twenty-three-foot building. As I zoomed down from a giant hill, I could have sworn that I was faster than a cheetah. On the first try, I kept saying to myself: “Aah hit the brake, hit the brake!” But I didn’t know how to hit the brake, so I just zoomed down. On the way down, the snow looked like wave in the ocean which stirred mix emotions in me: scared but mostly happy. But believe it or not I never ever crashed!

“I want to go to Magic Carpet trail!” my brother suggested after the break. So, I waddled along to that trail where I stood on a flat escalator that moved me to the other end. I was little bit nervous although the slope wasn’t steep. When I got near the end, I noticed my left foot couldn’t move. “Help, my ski got stuck!” I yelled. The operator stopped the escalator, so I could bend down and get my ski boot out of the ski, but it turned out to be challenging so I asked for help again. At last, I skied down that scaled-down slope and moved on a different trail-Bunny. As mom and I waited behind dad and my brother for chairlift ride, certainly, I saw both fell down the chairlift when they tried to sit on it when it passed by. I rushed to help them and felt a pang of sadness and tears escaped down my cheeks when I saw the bench hit my brother’s head. Trying regain their balance although restricted by the ski and snow but they recovered and continued the ride. “I’m not nervous mom,” I said while sitting on the chairlift by her side. At the

end of the day, I almost collapsed since I skied from dawn to dusk that I couldn't feel my legs anymore. As I left Cascade, I amazed how much I felt in love with this sport and how much fun it was. I waved and shouted loudly "Bye Cascade, see you next year!"



# Who Did It?

by Grayson Orr

4<sup>th</sup> Grade – 3<sup>rd</sup> Place

It was Friday when I came back from school. I had no homework. I went to my room to read a book and that's when I spotted it. My favorite teddy bear had red stuff that could have been blood all over it. Stuffing came out of the bear and it looked like mashed potatoes! I was going to yell for my mom to come up but that's when I knew my whole family was suspicious. I decided to be a detective. I followed the red tomato looking stuff, and it went to my bed. That's when my bed looked lumpy like someone was in it. I didn't see my brother anywhere when I came home. I was ready to take him down. I grabbed the blanket so hard. I ripped the blanket off like it was ripping Christmas gifts on Christmas morning. I didn't find anyone. I found pillows. Whoever did this was clever about it. I looked under my bed. Nothing. I looked in my closet, but the only thing I found was underwear that smelled like expired eggs. I looked in my stuffed animal bin. Nothing. I looked in my dresser. Nothing. I looked everywhere in my room. Nothing. I thought about giving up but then I spotted the red tomato looking stuff again. I followed it. I went to my brother's room. When I got in my brother's room I found: Nothing. Just then my dad yelled, "Foods ready!" I went downstairs seeing that my dad had red on his hand. Right away I realized that I didn't check his room or my mom's room, and sure enough my mom had red on her shirt. My brother came into the kitchen with his phone in his hand. "Put that down," said my mom. So my brother did. He put it on the end table, but when he did he had red on his hands. When I was eating dinner my dog came over to me, so I petted him. Then I felt something gooey like slime. I looked at his ear and it had red on it. After dinner I asked my family to all stand by the table. I asked them if any of them were in my room. They said "No." Then I realized I could check the Ring to see what everyone was up to in the house. I told them they were free to go. I got my phone and checked the garage first. In the garage my dad dropped paint on the ground. My dog came outside and sniffed the paint and got paint on his ear. My dad tried to get my dog's ear out of the paint and got paint on his hand. The ring also showed that my mom dropped tomato sauce on the ground and it squirted like a sprinkler at her and got red on her shirt. My brother was drawing as he got off the bus and got red on his finger. I went to bed that night wondering who did it? When I rolled over in bed I saw my parrot stuffed animal holding scissors and stuck to the scissors was the bear stuffing with the red stuff on it. I now know who did it, and I'm scared!



# Diary of a Shelter Cat

by Tessa McCune

5<sup>th</sup> Grade – 1<sup>st</sup> Place

Every day I sit in my cage and wait. So far I have waited for 11 years, 6 months, and 3 days. You see, I live in a shelter called Best Paws Animal Society. I was brought to the shelter when I was a little over 4 months old. A couple brought me here after they found me nearly lifeless on a riverbank. My old owner got tired of dealing with us kittens, so they threw me and my siblings into the river. My siblings did not survive.

Every day I wake up and I know it will be the same as the last. The shelter opens, people come in and head right over to the young and nimble kittens. Even still, I stand up by the cage door and hold my breath, hoping someone will notice me. But time and time again, they choose a young kitten like Macy, a young ten-month old kitten in the cage next to mine. I add a scratch to my wall. Whenever a cat gets adopted around here, I add another scratch. So far this year there is 304 marks and it is only July.

I am the oldest cat here at Best Paws Animal Society at 12 years old. I have tried making friends with some of the other senior cats but they are too concerned about counting their gray fur and talking about their grand kittens. After a few days of hanging out with them, I just can't take it anymore. I try to befriend the younger cats instead, but they just give me funny looks. I'm not sure why I have a hard time fitting in. In my mind, I am just as spry as any of those young kittens.

After a long time, I fall asleep. I dream of the perfect owners, a middle-aged couple, not very active, but kind. No dogs or kittens, just me and my family. I woke up, and again, people come in walk straight towards the kittens.

Then, someone vaguely familiar walks in. The scent... I recognize it. It smells like... the river? Wait, no! The people who rescued me! I hear them talking to the adoption worker about volunteering here. The adoption worker begins to show them around, and they ooh and aww at the kittens (of course). They get to me, sitting in my cage, and they pause. A funny look crosses their faces. They ask about my history. I hold my breath. "It's him! He's still here," they exclaim. Suddenly, my door is opened and the woman picks me up! "He's coming up with us," the woman

says. They fill out some paperwork and take me outside! I think I remember this smell, the crisp grass, the shining sun.

We get into a car, and drive for a bit. After finally slowing down we pull into a lovely country home. I see horses and chickens and many other strange animals. I notice a sunny spot on the porch that looks quite nice, and they take me inside. After an hour or two in the new house, I curl up on the porch and doze off. I finally know this is where I belong.

# My Voice

by Hope McSteen

5<sup>th</sup> Grade – 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

Hi, my name is Olivia. I live in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and I will never forget May 25, 2020, I believe many others can say the same. On that day, George Floyd was killed. It started out a normal day. I woke up, got ready, and went to virtual school. I was getting ready for bed when my mom, a reporter at our local news station, said she needed to report on a story about a Black man who died in police custody.

I fell asleep feeling bad for the Black man and his family. My mom was out cold when I woke up, so I went on with my day as usual but at around 2 I heard my mom curse. I thanked heaven my mic was off. Later I tried to ask her what was wrong, but she said she was busy, so I left her alone. The next day she was in the same position I left her in. When I asked her what was wrong, she sleepily replied, “Not now sweetie, but can you get me another cup of coffee? I could really use one.”

I complied, and she thanked me. My mom told me the video of the Black man’s, whose name was George Floyd, death sparked a national uproar of protests. While watching the news I heard the president sent in military reinforcements to stop people from getting “out of control”. There were some riots and looting but, in my opinion the majority were peaceful. The police used tear gas and rubber bullets to make people leave. After school, my mom said she was assigned to report at a protest that was going on tomorrow. I was shocked to say the least, but I was also worried for my mom. She could get hurt. I talked to my dad, about it he said not to worry, and everything would be ok.

I was worried sick. The next day my mom left as she said she would and thank goodness, nothing bad happened to her. Me and my friends were zooming with each other and inevitably the protests came up. My friend talked about how her cousin was in a protest and got hit with a rubber bullet and had a big pink spot where it hit which her dad called a “strawberry”. We all laughed a little, which was a nice escape from the serious reality of that situation.

A few days later, my friend Sofia told me about a kids protest that was coming up in the park where everything was approved by the police. I asked my family if I could go and have them take me. Mom said she could not go because she had to be impartial because of her job. But dad said he’d take me. I was ecstatic, I made posters, and told all my other friends about it, some even said they would come too. I got up super early the day of the protest, I was pumped. I got everything ready. We packed up and went. When we got there, I met up with my friends, socially distant and wearing masks of course. We all were ready to make our voices heard, to draw attention to the injustices that so many Black people face daily, to meet others with the

same purpose, and unite so others will listen and stop denying the horrible truth, and we did just that.

Derek Chauvin, the officer who kneeled on George Floyd's neck, was tried and found guilty of murdering him. I went to more protests and felt my true power to make change grow with each one. It truly was a horrible thing that happened to George Floyd but, it inspired me to find and speak out about the injustices that happen every day and that we all have a voice inside but only some choose to use it.

# The Mystery Behind the Walls

By Sidney Gargano

5<sup>th</sup> Grade – 3<sup>rd</sup> Place

It was a cold winter night and Monkton Road was as quiet as a mouse, except for house 2814. Whispers filled the house, and if you listened closely to the walls, the only words you could hear were Jacklyn Mills.

“Jackie!” Jacklyn’s mom called. “Jackie, we’re here!” Jacklyn yawned. “Where are we again?” “Our new home, silly,” she replied “Oh,” Jacklyn said glumly as she thought of her dad and sister in warm and sunny California, while she was stuck in New York with her mom and Stew, her stepdad.

Seven hours later, the Mills were fast asleep except for Jacklyn. She wandered around the house exploring every bit of it, until she heard voices coming from the wall. “We can’t just...walk into the open. I mean... who does that Mackenzie?” Who does that?” said a man’s voice. “Sorry,” Mackenzie replied, “I thought it was a good idea.” “Well, it wasn’t,” said the man. “Now if we don’t have a plan by midnight, boss is going to kill us all! Is that clear?”. “Yes Gavin” replied a bunch of voices.

Jacklyn sprinted up the stairs and into her parents’ room. Surely, they would believe her. “Mom! Da- I mean Stew. Voices! I hear voices inside the walls!” Jacklyn’s mom rubbed her eyes. “Jackie, are you hearing things?”. “No!” Jacklyn exclaimed. “I’m not hearing things! There were these two people talking. Gavin and Ma- “. “Jackie, please just go back to bed”. Jacklyn hesitated. “Fine!” she yelled as she stormed off.

The next morning, Jacklyn woke up super early while her mom and Stew were still asleep. Jacklyn pressed on each wall for an empty space, until finally she felt a hollow wall. She carefully pressed on the wall and walked inside. She noticed everything was black. Even the walls! Then suddenly Jacklyn heard voices. “That’s a stupid plan Mackenzie. If we don’t steal this money before 10:00 am when boss is up, we will all be fired. Got that?!” Gavin said. “Yes sir” replied Mackenzie. Jacklyn followed the voices and fortunately the five people dressed in black had their backs to her. “I’ll go check our data stats” said someone else. Jacklyn raced out the door and up to her bedroom. She had a perfect plan.

It was nearing 10:00am and Jacklyn was ready. She tip-toed down the stairs and into the secret passageway and heard Gavin. “Boss will be here any minute! Have the plans ready?” he asks. “Yes sir” someone replies. “Alright, what’s so urgent? I have a meeting at 11:30 and my wife will be expecting me for breakfast, make it quick,” said a familiar voice. Jacklyn had to see who it was. She peeked into the black room and gasped as “the boss” looked at her. “The boss” was Stew!

Jacklyn yelled, "I knew it! I knew you were up to something! Now I'm going to tell my mom and she's going to divorce you and you'll go to jail. So, I can finally be with my dad and sister!" "Wait kid," Stew started, but before he knew it, she was already gone.

"Mom!" Jacklyn yelled. "What is it Jackie?" "It's Stew, he's trying to use you to get more money by stealing it from you!" Jacklyn exclaimed. Just then, Stew ran up from the wall. "Don't listen to Jacklyn, someone was having some nightmares last night, huh?" Stew lied.

"No, what I said is true! I have proof! Listen to the recording," Jacklyn cried. Sure enough, voices spilled out of her phone. "This is crazy" Jacklyn's mom started. "Let's get out of here. Jackie, pack your stuff. I'm calling the police." Soon enough, the police started pouring out of their vehicles. They escorted Stew and away and he went to the station. Jacklyn and her mom were relieved that Stew was out of their lives forever.



# Memories

by Skylyn Worden

6<sup>th</sup> Grade – 1st Place

My memories.  
Every single one of them  
is stacked in the corner of  
my room.  
But it doesn't  
feel like my room.  
I feel like I am  
trespassing on someone else's home.

Everyone tells me to open  
them.  
To unpack the past and  
welcome in the future,  
but doesn't that make it  
harder?

Because only I know  
that when I open the boxes,  
I will find mementos  
and keepsakes  
and trophies.  
Only I know  
that when I take each one out,  
I will stare at it  
intensely,  
a longing for the old.

And they *expect* me  
to let the nostalgia take me  
somewhere dreamy and faraway.  
They *expect* me to be  
happy.  
But that's the problem.  
It's hard to be

happy  
when your parents  
were so greedy for money  
that they would give up  
their daughter  
for a robbery.

I finally decided to open  
one box today.  
The tape smelled  
just like my old house.  
With a  
*crack*  
the box came apart and  
picture frames  
flew.

Pictures of my grandma  
and friends  
and cousins  
and parents.  
Hot tears sprung to my eyes.  
They flowed down my cheeks.  
Onto my Disney Cruise sweatshirt.  
Onto the floorboards that will never  
be a part of  
my home.

I slid my back down the wall.  
Even the paint here didn't  
smell like home.  
I still wondered if my broken life  
could be put back  
together.  
When something gets beat against  
so many times that it  
breaks,  
can it be put  
together again?

As I sprinted down the stairs

and wiped my eyes dry  
I shouted that I was going to the store.  
Martha and Charlie asked if I was ok.  
I said yes,  
but my tear-stained cheeks  
and puffy red eyes  
said otherwise.  
They are my “stand-in parents”  
while my  
real father  
and real mother  
get back on their feet.

As I shuffled down the street  
I could feel the eyes  
staring daggers at me.  
“She was the daughter of the  
robbers.”  
“I can’t believe they would steal  
millions of dollars.”  
“For all we know  
she probably helped them.”  
These whispers  
crept up on my dreams.  
They crawled my skin  
and I pondered them  
everyday.

As I walked to the grocery store  
I saw mothers taking pictures of their children.  
I saw groups of teenagers laughing.  
I saw a happy dad and daughter.  
They were all happy.  
But then I saw  
him.  
He had a shirt with multiple holes in it  
and was sitting in a broken wheelchair  
begging for money.  
I had always had something,  
that this person probably  
never did.

Searching my pockets,  
I found a 5 dollar bill.

As I dropped it in the  
large empty case,  
His face lit up.  
To me 5 dollars is  
nothing.  
But to him,  
it meant a meal.  
And I came to  
The realization  
that I am living  
my own life  
with my own problems.  
And so is everyone else.

*I don't need a new life.*  
*I don't need anything to*  
*change.*  
*I don't need more than what I have.*  
*If I want a better life,*  
*I must do it*  
*myself*  
These thoughts coursed through my mind  
at light speed.

I came home with  
a smile.  
I came home with  
a new mindset.  
Because maybe I couldn't fix  
what my parents had done.  
Maybe I couldn't get the same  
life back I had before.  
But I will learn to  
be ok with that.  
And I am proud to  
call this town  
*my home.*

# Mia's Revenge

by Mayeli Leon

6<sup>th</sup> Grade – 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

Mia was a beautiful Labradoodle, she and her friends Sally and Sheila, who were golden retrievers, couldn't wait to go to the festival where they could have lots of fun. When the day finally came, they were so excited and quickly went to the first play area, the obstacle course!

"Do you guys want to go enter for the race?" Sally explained, "If you win you get to keep one of these play places!". They were sure that they would win. They quickly signed up before anyone else.

"We should do some stretches while we wait." Sheila suggested.

"You're right!" Mia said, "Let's practice!"

Mia and her friends practiced and saw how fast they could run. After practicing for around ten minutes all of them were tired, they took a rest and just sat around. They were just talking and realized that the bullies of their school were staring at them. The bullies, Mackenzie and her friends, Lily and Sophia had bullied Sheila because she was the smartest. They thought that Sheila made them look bad.

Mackenzie was the most popular dog in their class, she was a Husky which was black and white. Everyone thought she was the most beautiful dog in the world... until Mia came to town. When Mia moved to Mackenzie's school, everyone thought she was the best dog, after Mackenzie found that out, she started being mean to Mia and spread rumors about her, and ruin her stuff.

"Hey muddy!" Mackenzie yelled while on the way to Mia. Muddy was the nickname she gave Mia because her fur was brown.

Mia ignored them...

"You're looking dirtier than usual." Mackenzie commented, Lily chuckled at the comment.

"Making fun of her isn't gonna make you any better?!" Sally bellowed.

"Let's go somewhere away from them." Sheila whispered to Mia while Sally and Mackenzie were arguing.

Sheila, Sally and Mia quickly ran off and hid behind a bouncy house.

"We should've said something to them so they can finally stay away from us!" Sally said.

"Let's just practice here." Mia sighed.

After they practiced, they heard some noises coming closer but they thought that it was probably just someone in the bouncy house so they just continued. After a while they took a rest and just talked. They noticed Mackenzie behind Mia.

"Mia! Behind you!" Sheila yelled.

Mia quickly turned around but she was too late. By the time she turned around Mackenzie had sprayed silly string all over Mia. Tears rolled up in Mia's eyes, she knew Mackenzie knew it was very hard to get silly string out of fur. Mia ran to the corn maze.

"Mia! Come back!" Sally screamed. She knew it was too late, but she followed her.

Sheila looked at Mackenzie with raged eyes and quickly followed Sally.

"Mia! Come back Mia!" Sally and Sheila hollered while trying to find Mia in the maze. After minutes of searching, they finally found Mia rolled up crying with string all over her.

"Mia!" Sheila and Sally said. They ran towards Mia trying to comfort her.

Sheila had a plan and they agreed. After they got out of the maze, they started the first phase in their plan. They sneakily grabbed a bucket and filled it up with mud. When the bullies were distracted, they went behind Mackenzie and without her realizing it, they dumped the bucket of mud on her. Mackenzie screamed and turned around. Everyone started laughing at her.

“Why would you do that?!” Mackenzie screamed.

“So, you can learn not to mess with us anymore!” Mia roared.

Mackenzie opened her mouth but instead of saying anything, she ran away. Lily and Sophia followed her. Later they ran into Mackenzie and thought she was gonna yell her head off, but instead, just walked away.

Mia, Sally and Sheila hugged each other. Mia was proud that she stood up for herself and knew that Mackenzie learned her lesson.

# Caged Bird Awaits to Fly

by Savni Gadgil

6<sup>th</sup> Grade – 3<sup>rd</sup> Place

There is not a single time I remember when I was not  
alone.

Not  
even  
One.

All I remember  
was the day my parents decided to  
abandon me.

The memory is so vivid, so clear.  
It almost felt like it was yesterday,  
though it's nearly been 14 years.

Whispers of disgust were heard through my tiny ears.

*A girl? A GIRL?*

They had wanted a  
boy.  
And, I was a  
girl.

They didn't even try to wait,  
they didn't even give me a chance.  
They just threw me away.

There I was, a newborn baby,  
abandoned in the hospital.  
When I was strong enough even

they  
would throw me away.

But at least there I was taken care of.  
Though  
nothing  
they did, could have substituted the love and warmth I yearned for.

The gentle touch of a mother,  
the thump of her heartbeat  
as you slept in her arms,  
the soft rhythmic beat.

The laughter,  
the tears,  
the joy.

The wholehearted welcome into the world.  
I never experienced it,  
and I never would.

Why?

Because I am a 14-year-old girl,  
with no parents.  
Living on the street.  
Each day life gets more polluted.  
Each day life gets more expensive.  
Each day life becomes more insufferable.  
Each day life gets crueler.

And it's not as if that is for everyone.

I see kids my age have friends,  
go to school,  
eat good food,  
have clean water to drink,  
take baths,  
live in a nice apartment or house.

Then you have me,



I have no friends,  
I cannot afford school.  
I eat leftover food from nearby restaurants,  
I drink water from thrown away water bottles or even puddles,  
I use 10 cent wipes and pond water to clean myself  
and  
I live on the street.

Even if years,  
months,  
weeks,  
days,  
hours,  
minutes,  
and seconds pass by,  
I'd never be able to get used to this life.

Loneliness.  
Even that word scares me.  
It feels like it's eating me whole.  
Like I'm caged in my own thoughts.  
Like I'd never be able to escape.

But...

I have something.

Something special.  
Something powerful.  
Something that I never want to lose.

That sense of hope,  
Stored deep down in me.

That one day,  
ONE day,  
I would be worth so much more.

Not just a lowly girl,  
Living on the street.

That sense of hope,  
Sparkling within the darkness

That maybe even one day,  
I would be cared for

That  
One  
Day

I would finally find my worth.  
That sense of hope,  
Showing me that kindness would be found even in the darkest of times,

That can be found in the laughter that finds its way to my broken heart,  
The waves, that call to me,  
make me feel like I belong,

The sound of birds chirping, a music to my delicate ears,  
The bell of the ice-cream vendor, who cares to share

Even the kindness that comes  
From the slightest smile from a  
passerby  
On the street

Gives me,

That sense of hope,  
Telling me that one day

I'll fly.

# Additional Submitting Authors

## 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

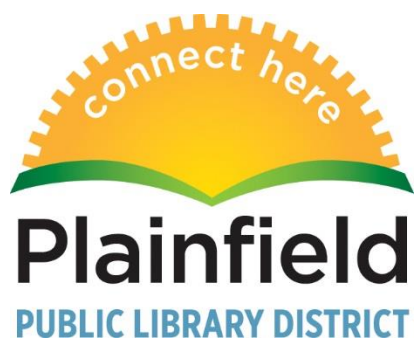
Sochi Amadi • Anishka Anand • Hannah Beauchane • Skyler Kerwin • Lina Lamas  
Brianna Lentz • Sophia Lenzie • Rianna Maceren • Hayden Majors • Russell Nanney  
Peyton Schultz • Aarav Sharma • Jayden Shelton • Sedona Worden • Durrat-us-Sharaf Zaki

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

Shaurya Barua • Noah Deeds • Ping de la Rama  
Madison Greenfield-Sliwa • Tori Murdock • Katelyn Smutny • Lily Talsma

## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

Isaiah Bautista • DJ Freeman • Lucas Gawrys • Madisyn Kammer  
Kailynn Mariscal • Michelle Moskova • Madison Murphy • Karina Nosa  
Tracy Olarge • Dyaksha Prabakar • Fatima Salim • Annabella Sciortino  
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