

WINNER (Years 9-10)

Angel

By **Stella Weston**, Rotorua Lakes High School



We were burying her. I wasn't allowed to cry: Dad said that was the rule. Dad with his breath that smelled like vinegar and firefighters. Dad who got to make the rules about who could cry. I kept my eyes on the stone angel near the grave. I was seven.

I ran away — to the cemetery. I lay in the centre of circles upon circles of white crosses. I looked at the grey sky and examined my wrist where the shadows of dad's fingers still clenched it. I was eight.

Wandering the cemetery, I found beauty in the serenity of death. Comfort in the grey sky. Patterns in the broken milk bottles and treasures that littered the graves — glass roses, mosaic pottery, dead flowers, toy cars and weathered golden necklaces. I was nine.

I learned the stories of the dead. Lyle, who died saving Minnie Day from drowning. Jack, who gave his tomorrow for our today. But I didn't know who they loved, what made them smile. I knew her but I never went to her grave; I wasn't allowed to cry. I was ten.

When dad went out for one drink and didn't return, finally I searched for the angel among the patterns and the serenity and the comforting grey sky. I was eleven.

I never found the angel. The serenity stepped out of its disguise, became loneliness. The patterns no longer beautiful; I didn't know why some people got broken glass and some trinkets. I was twelve.

Ref: AW-1162

SECOND PLACE (Years 9-10)

Abandoned

By **Kayden Leftly**, Christchurch Boys High School

I remember the day Mum got her car. The hot sun making the little coloured flags hanging over us look fuzzy. The chubby salesman's big grin as Mum pointed at it. The intense shade of black covered the car in a cloak which throbbed and twisted, snatching light from the air. The salesman, waving massive sweaty palms, talked about technical things I didn't understand. He said we could take it for a try, and Mum started the car. Even from the start, the growl scared me, a throaty coughing that reverberated in my head. I looked behind us, seeing glimmering dust fly in the wake of the metal beast. The engine grew to a powerful whine, and Mum yanked the gearstick, wrangling the beast into a snarl two octaves lower, the vibrations sending shards of adrenalin down my veins. We pulled back into the car yard. Mum gave the man money and signed some papers. On the way home, Mum rolled down the windows, a wall of air hitting our faces, Mum's long hair trailing in tendrils behind her head.



We found Mum's car yesterday. Nestled in a bed of gravel, starkly contrasting the kaleidoscope of greenery, silent observers swaying in the breeze. The tyres were ripped rubber phantoms. The cavernous black paint remained only in flakes, void-like islands stranded in an ocean of orange-brown dead metal. The seats screaming from their steel carcasses.

It was Mum's pride, her second child, as Dad often remarked jokingly.

They didn't find Mum.

Ref: AWC-0659-F

HIGHLY COMMENDED (Years 9-10)

Undefined

By **Alice Ankersmit**, Waikato Diocesan School for Girls

My identity is a frenzy,
My mind a puppeteer.
Conflicting thoughts
Pull me every way,
Tugging me.
I don't know,
Who or what I am.

Everyone has different opinions,
Formed on the basis
Of surface characteristics;
How I look, act, my parents.

I am lost
In the maelstrom of my mind.
I am a small boat,
Ravaged by the stormy sea.
Tossed in every direction
Bobbing under, resurfacing.

I am a blend,
Mixture, fusion, combination.
The lines are blurred
They are not sure,
Neither am I.
Pākeha, Māori.
Neither? both?

Who I am, is
Undefined.

Ref: DCDL-0038430



HIGHLY COMMENDED (Years 9-10)

A Call To Home

By **Petulia Cooper-Woodhouse**, Wellington Girls College

Sand everywhere
Coating knees and elbows
Filling kanohi a taringa
Burrowing into every cut and crevice
Relentless
Like war.

These battles not our own
The sun beating down
United in haka, a call to home
To whānau, to pride
Tīmata.



Ref: A-00891-F

HIGHLY COMMENDED (Years 9-10)

Not Alone, Not Afraid

By **Tia Deb**, Avondale College



Beneath the moonlight, waters
Turn sour, black and cold.
Whistles beyond the mountains thrum.
In the dark, the rocks turn to monsters,
Hunched on the shoreline,
Lonely, as the breeze blows;
And no one notices the sly
Little figure on the bank of a beach,
Her feet dug into the mud,
'Cause she feels she's had enough.
The waves hum a sleepy tune, and she
Discovers a peace belonging to only her.
All is silent as the din of the city subsides.
The clouds leave an inky sky, spattered
Sporadically with stars; they radiate.
Studying the night, the girl,
Not alone, not afraid, smiles wide.
Under the observant eye
Of the vast expanse of space,
Not alone, not afraid; at peace.

Ref: AWC-0770-F

With Digital Art created by Tia Deb (Autodesk Sketchbook)

HIGHLY COMMENDED (Years 9-10)

When the Street Wakes Up

By **Toby Hands**, Wellington College



I stand there in the dark, the streetlights twitch as the anxiety goes up another level, and the footpath begins to expand and shrink in a matter of seconds due to this uneven depth perception, this is when the street wakes up, nocturnal animals, the footpath needs to eat, cigarette butts and gum stuck to its face after a long day, and the streetlights take its medicine fortnightly, people help it do it, because they don't like it getting anxious, but it gets anxious when people watch it, when people are there in the dark, when people suspect something is happening and this is when the street wakes up. The rain awakens the footpath, the gutters and everything on sight and this is dinner for the lonesome drain, as he gobbles all he can and stuffs it in via drainage pipes and chambers, and this is when the street wakes up and when the people are asleep.

Ref: 35mm-102355-F

HIGHLY COMMENDED (Years 9-10)

Autumn in Arrowtown

By **Rowan Matthew**, Cashmere High School



This day is heaven,
Heaven on Earth.
The way the clear sky gives way to rays of hazy
sunshine,
Warming the hills and my face.
The way the wind rustles the golden leaves
above me,
Scattering sunlight on the street,
And making crisp, calm music.

The pale blue sky clashes with the straw coloured hills,
Parched after the unforgiving heat of summer.
The distant calls of the migrating geese ring in my ears,
And I tilt my head up to the sky to try and find the source.
Dust tickles my nose, and my eyes water slightly.
The dried leaves crunch under my feet,
As if with each step, I am whispering to the tranquil world around me,
Reminding the Earth that I exist.

I feel a sense of belonging, a sense of true peace,
On this mellow autumn day in Arrowtown.

Ref: GG-12-0149