

Creative Writing: Prose

FIRST PLACE:

The Merry-go-round

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All you hear as you walk through the dark, dark woods is your breath, and the leaves and twigs that crunch beneath your feet. The forest stretches endlessly around you, the trees tall and looming in the blackness. You can only make out those closest to you: their rough bark, the moss that clings to them desperately, their browning leaves. The rest of the trees are a backdrop of darkness. Anything could be lurking there, unseen. Suddenly, you hear an owl hoot, it's low t-wit-t-woo a startling yet comforting sound already familiar to your young ears. You breathe in the scent of the earth and the leaves, and it makes you feel safe again. There is no breeze tonight, and it is warm in the cover of the forest. The high canopy rises far above you, dwarfing you. It blocks out the pale light of the full moon, creating an ethereal, shadowy world. The path before you is worn and clear from the years of use, and you know it well, so it takes little thinking to steer yourself through the trees, following the trail of memories.

Soon you reach the clearing. What lies before you is a sight few people have ever seen; few people will ever see it. Sitting there, still bright and beautiful from years of being untouched, is a merry-go-round. In the light of the moon, finally clear in the sky, the colours seem to glow. Red, blue, green, yellow, and gold shine on the old carousel. For a moment you simply stand in awe, taking in the majesty of such a disregarded thing. You know that no one else knows about this. It's *yours*. Your secret. You walk up to it, slowly, like always. You walk up the steps, listening to the soft familiar creaks with each step. You don't know how long the carousel has been here - longer than your lifetime, at least - but it has the feeling of being both very old and brand new at the same time. You walk round the platform, running your hands over the wooden horses that are forever frozen prancing. Their paint is hardly cracked, the gold and blue manes, the black and green saddles still perfect. The horses stare at you, their black eyes gleaming, but not scary. Not menacing, like the unseen things in the forest.

As you continue to walk, you read the names painted on the necks of the silent wooden beasts. *Midnight. Diamond. Star. Flame*. You remember playing here as a young child. How the horse seemed so alive, so real to you; each had its own nature and temperament. Now, you smile to yourself, and go to one of the horses. When you sit on it, you can just reach the lever on the central pillar. You pull it down, and listen as it all comes to life. Bulbs lining the top canopy of the merry-go-round burst to life, lighting the clearing and the thick of trees lining it. And as the tinkling fairground music starts to play, the carousel, with a shudder and a creak, starts to turn. It spins steadily, the horses around you bobbing in time with one another. As you rise and fall, you hear a light *pitter patter*, and turn to see rain falling gently from the open black sky. The light from the moon and the carousel catches the raindrops, reflects off them, and makes each one glow. Quickly you are turning in a world of falling sparks. You watch it, marvelling at the beauty which words are inadequate to describe. Then you lean down, gazing at the falling flames, and place your head on the horse's neck. You smile to yourself, and close your eyes.