

Millie Roberts

1st Place

2019 CFUW Writing Contest

### My Home

The message was clear. Its letters dripped down the walls, draining onto the creaky, wooden floor below. A rotten stench permeated the hallway and spread into the rooms adjacent. The moment I awakened, I immediately recognized an uneasiness pulling inside of me. For days I had felt an eerie presence join me in my home; my mind had reached places it had never been before. Despite the lack of an open window, cold wind breezed through, unsettling papers and pushing pencils onto the ground. One night, I had sworn that a frigid hand placed itself lightly onto mine.

When you entered through the front doors, you made yourself at home, welcoming me into your arms. You were a comforting spirit to have within my walls. The mornings were brighter, the birds chirped melodically. The blue flowers planted in my garden bloomed. Loneliness had never been a problem. Isolation and solitude were feelings that did not faze me. But without you, I could not bear it.

How did I never notice? When I examined my home afterwards, I could see with such clarity. The ancient wallpaper peeled and curled right off the walls. Windows remained broken in empty rooms, with shattered glass sprinkled around the floor. Sometimes, while I lay in bed, I heard scurrying from the ceiling above. When looking out the windows however, I couldn't locate the memories. I couldn't remember how they came to break. I couldn't recall when the staircase began to groan, or when the logs in the fireplace turned to ash.

Of course, I will never forget that night. The night when the bright sun hid behind dark clouds to escape your fury. No matter how many times you tried to distort it, to manipulate what occurred, it will always be indisputable. You screamed, and in my naivety, I screamed back. As you bandaged my wounds that you caused, I wished that I had been as smart as the sun. You apologized, confessed your mistakes, and I swear the sun came out again.

It was like the clock that sits on the front room's wall. The repetitive clicking. Every day was the same. Clockwork. Hell was raised, and then you were an angel. Hell was raised, and then you were an angel. Hell was raised, and then... I was almost sent to heaven.

You made the bruises seem like love letters. The scars were lightning bolts of affection.

I sat in my home, alone. I saw the ruin that you left behind, and I knew that I would never open my home's doors again. The curtains would remain drawn. No one should wreak havoc the way you did. Sometimes people tried to get in through the smashed windows; however, once they saw inside they subsequently left. They may have liked its appearance on the outside, but the inside was far too damaged for anyone to be interested. I built a fortress surrounding my home for protection. Solitude and isolation were the only ways I could survive.

When I woke up this morning to the smell of blood, I did not expect what was written on my wall. I instantly recognized it as my own hand writing. It was spine-chilling. After reading it over and over again, I eventually understood. The idea had been gradually dawning on me, slowly tearing through the cloudy haze in my brain. Now, the message was clear.

“OPEN THE DOOR.”

Suddenly the walls surrounding me began to close in. The hallways and rooms I once knew so well were distorted, becoming an impossible maze. The message's words repeated in my head until they were almost incoherent. *Open the door... open the door... open the door.* I

blindly stumbled down the staircase, simultaneously trying to catch my breath and keep out the toxins that filled the air. Once I arrived at the front doors, I fumbled with all the locks I had put in place, and one by one I unlocked them.

With the last of my energy, I forced the doors open. They revealed a bright, summer's day, like those before you were with me. I was surprised to see the glorious sunshine and to breathe the fresh air. After taking a deep breath, I stepped forward. I heard a soft crunch underfoot and glanced down, shocked to see the blue flowers blooming beside my feet. The same ones that I was certain had died.