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3rd Place, Elementary Division

2020 CFUW Writing Contest

The Journey Around the Riverbend

When did it all go wrong? When did the thick clouds start to cover the smiling sun?
When did the cheerful chirping of birds and buzzing of insects turn into the eerie silence? Why
did everything around me have to change?

Life used to be so peaceful. I would tumble against the smooth pebbles on the ground; the sun shining down on me, allowing me to glisten. Fish swam gently through me, jumping gracefully over the large rocks. They were so determined, fighting through the dangers as they went upstream. I deeply admired their perseverance and strength. Colourful birds flew elegantly and effortlessly above me. They perched atop large trees that loomed over my body. The trees were not intimidating, in fact, they provided shade on days when the sun was scorching. Deer would come to drink from me, and in return would always entertain me with fascinating stories about the excitement of their busy lives. Each night, beautiful shining stars lit the night sky, making the world seem to sparkle. I appreciated everything in my beautiful life.

One day, the trees that canopied over me began to crash to the ground. The silver fish rushed to leave, and left me alone and confused. The birds had already fled. Their precious homes were being destroyed. The stars hid and were nowhere to be found in the pitch black sky. The world was silent and vacant, except for the sound of my empty stomach rumbling for company.

Days passed, and the world began to close in on me. I was more and more alone by the minute. The trees that had provided comfort, were disappearing every day, each with an ear splitting thud that created endless ripples in my fragile body.

Suddenly, the thunderous sounds of the collapsing trees ceased. The trees stopped falling! But, the end of the destruction of this once perfect forest was yet to come.

The animals were furry; their yellowing teeth overhanging. Their noses stuck up in the air arrogantly, and their dark beady eyes bore into me. Their long, heavy tails rattled the walls that contained me as they snickered cruelly. These creatures destroyed my forest. My home. My life. They proudly carried the wood they had harvested from the trees and placed it in me. With every log they placed, I got weaker, and they got stronger. They used my water to swim, drink, and bathe; however, they kept piling on the heavy logs.

Days became weeks, and weeks became months, and the pile of logs was growing at a tremendous rate. I tried to be brave, to not let the logs affect me, but their weight was unbearable, and I caved in. The animals looked at me with smug grins on their small fiendish faces. I stared into their eyes desperately. How could some furry monsters, cause such destruction?

The blockade of logs that the creatures built enclosed me in a small area. I could not run freely as I used to. They now could manipulate me. I was powerless against them.

I had lost all hope and dignity. I was giving in. Maybe this really was the end. I was now being controlled by these merciless, villainous animals. But then I heard a voice. It was soft and gentle. "Be like the fish," it said. This small message was very powerful. I repeated the message in my head. The fish were so tenacious and faithful to themselves. I had to fight for myself too.

As they continued building the piles, I pushed off the logs. As they tried to drink my water, I told them to leave. I refused to let them hurt me, and miraculously, I got stronger. These creatures were using the energy I lost to keep hurting me. I refused to give in, and they couldn't destroy me anymore. The stronger I was, the more the pile shrunk. Finally, the last log was gone, and I was at peace once again.

My entire life I tried to flow, like a river, with the people around me, but it wasn't always easy. Insults were piled on me and felt like weights on my heart. The bullies thrived on the anger and sadness they caused me to feel. So, I learned to be strong and push through the hard times, because with determination, I could turn my life around and make a change!